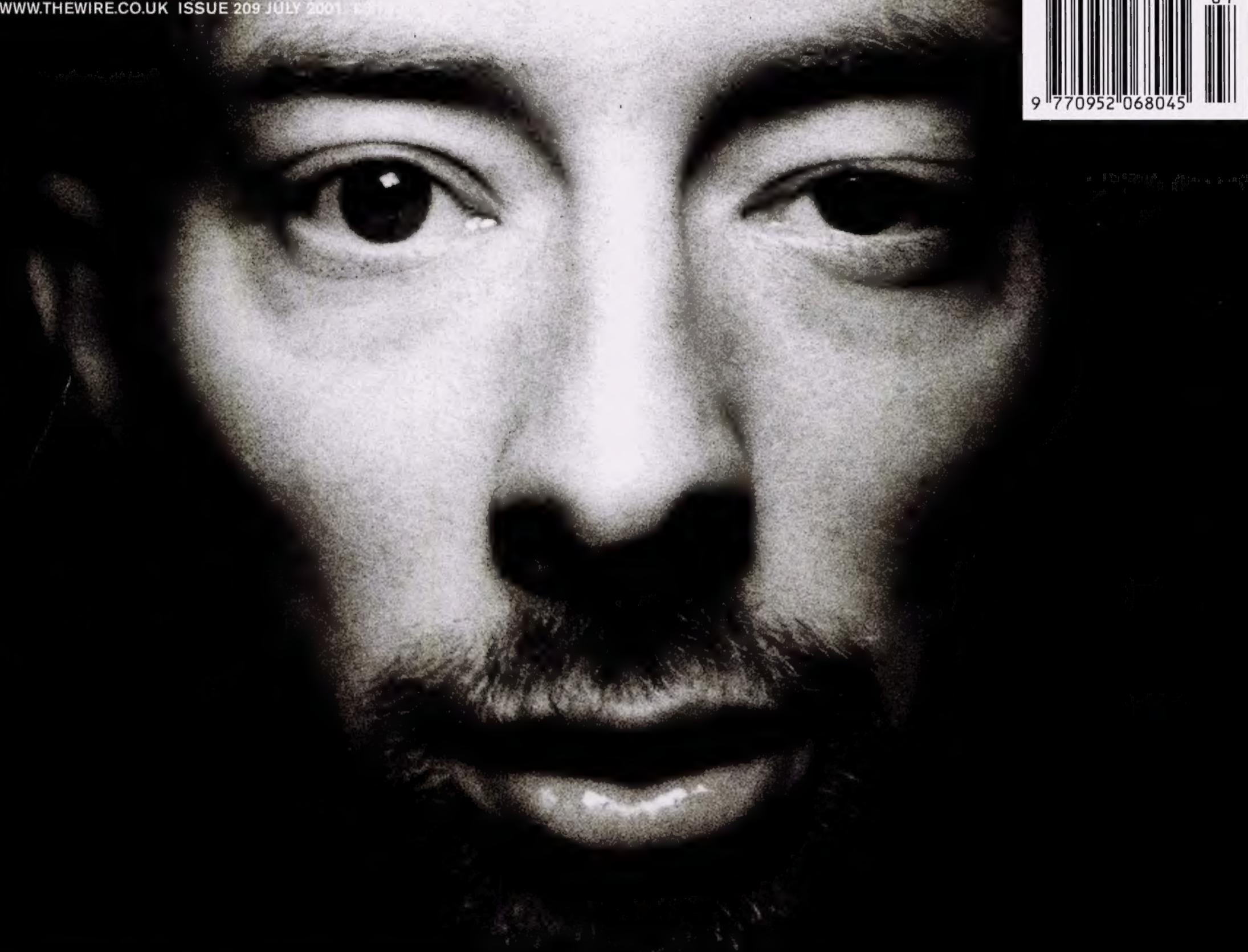


THE WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN
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RADIOHEAD MicroHouse Arthur Doyle Pauline Oliveros

Metropolis and the Man-Machine Jacques Attali Four Tet John Hudak Fennesz Chrome



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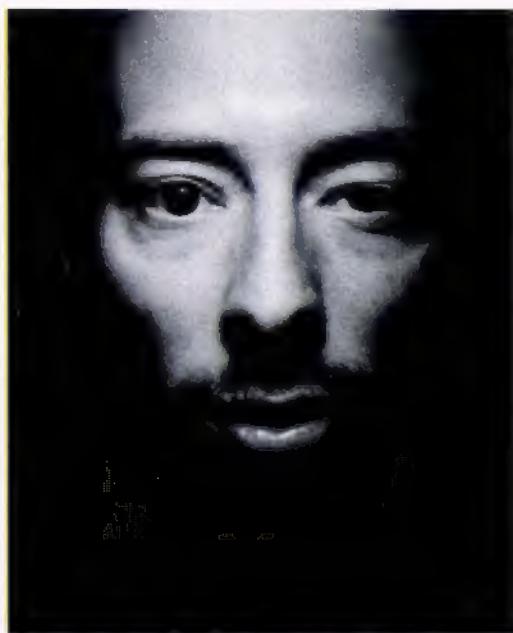
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Editor's Idea

As I write, George W Bush, architect of the most unstable global equilibrium in recent memory, is on a grand tour around Europe, shadowed by a caravan of hate. But where is the music, where is the battle hymn of the anti-Republicans? Why, if protest has accumulated its largest forces for some considerable time, does so little pop culture reflect and complement it, harnessing popular sentiment against corruption, empire building and violent oppression? The times are wild; crazy options suddenly feel like the pathway to rational solutions. Force Bush to adopt the Kyoto protocol: boycott all American music!

It might surprise some readers to see a group the size of Radiohead in *The Wire*. Without pleading too hard here – Simon Reynolds makes an admirable case for their presence in these pages, beginning on page 26 – it shouldn't faze anyone who read our writers' Records of the Year poll for last year, when *Kid A* was voted number three with a bullet. My own interest in the group came late, having pigeonholed them, without listening too hard, during the 90s as just another histrionic Britpop act. Which they probably were, at least until they entered their current 'technicolor period'. It finds them 'capitalising' on the momentum they achieved following the massive success of *OK Computer* by crafting a music which sounds utterly Other when set against both their own most celebrated work and that of their 'competitors' in the battle for global chart dominance. Even if you struggle to get past Thom Yorke's "love it or loathe it" voice, there is a

sense of rawness and compelling Weltschmerz beating beneath the increasingly complex arrangements on their last three albums. And by the group's own admission (in an exchange with a correspondent on their own Website), "We ended up inside the perimeter fence when the music business decided to stop having faith in new music and fatten itself off for the big merger. Lucky us."

Music analysis seems unusually sensitive to sales volume, but there is a weird relativity in such pronouncements which history wipes clean. Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, for example, a key *Wire* record, racked up a six figure sale when it appeared in 1969. Even more astonishing was the recent revelation that Morton Subotnick's synthesizer composition *Touch*, just reissued on CD and DVD, sold 40,000 copies in its original quadraphonic version, again in 1969. Nowadays this is 'specialist music'; to attain a five figure sale would be a minor miracle. But there have always been glorious anomalies in this territory, such as Laurie Anderson's "O Superman", which held the UK's Number One position for nine weeks in the early 80s. More recently, Sigur Rós, who featured on our January cover, racked up an impressive 150,000 units in the UK and Europe with their album *Aegetis Byrjun*, while those other priests of despondent protest, Godspeed You Black Emperor!, who were interviewed in issue 195, have amassed sales of 40,000 in the same territories. Are we to create a numeric ceiling beyond which certain artists are denied coverage in

the magazine? To do so would surely be ludicrous.

Times have changed indeed. 30 years ago, chart busters such as Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth" and even Lennono's "Give Peace A Chance" harnessed a popular expression of disaffection and discord. 21st century protest apparently has no time, no need of music. But surely the most appropriate musical totem for the current wave of mass, grass roots dissent would be a Radiohead song, for what other million selling act is willing to insert lyrics that challenge the "Holy Roman Empire [to] come on if you think you're hard enough"? A small gesture, perhaps, but to these ears it is one accurate rendering of the aggrieved sense of disempowerment signified by low-turnout elections in so many Western countries.

We will always celebrate those musicians who remain mobile, nomadic, broadminded and willing to raise their head above the parapet or descend into murkier territory. Moreover, it feels right to flush ourselves out with appropriate channels in the mainstream, if only to prevent our own backwaters from stagnation. All the underground/marginal/samizdat/DIY sonic activity which we attempt to document each month is surely rendered meaningless if it cannot hold itself up next to something as large and market-penetrating as Radiohead. Even specialist magazines fail to tell the whole truth if they ringfence themselves off from the surrounding environment. And if we entirely neglect to engage with that increasingly unstable place, we may find ourselves drowned out by it. **ROB YOUNG**

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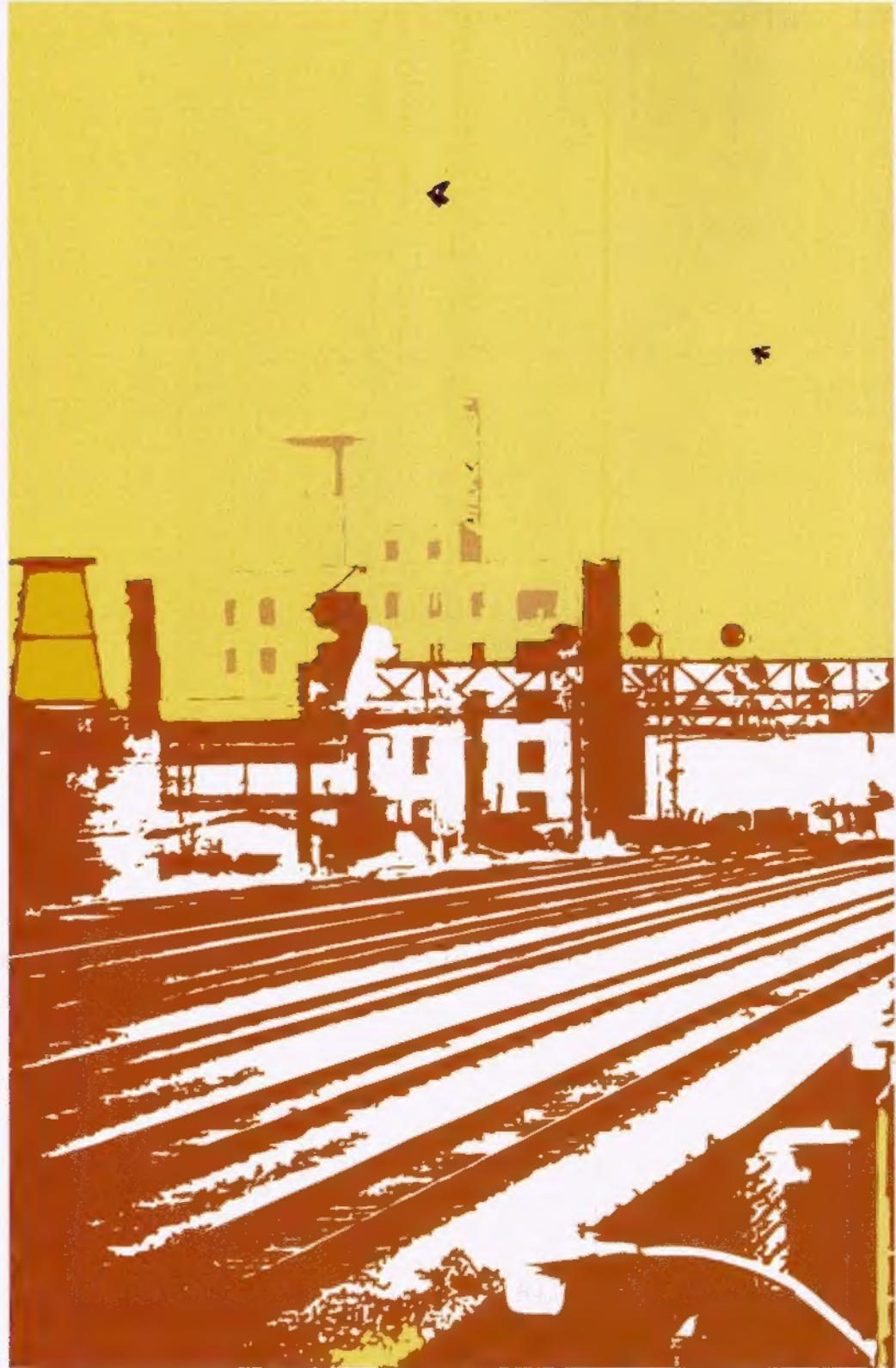
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Radiohead lines

Regarding Ian Penman's review of Radiohead's *Amnesiac* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 208): musical snobbery does not become you. Cut it out. "The average *Wire* reader, I'd imagine, is unlikely to be surprised or impressed..." SNOB. "Within its own frame of reference — mild British rock — it's diverting enough." SNOB. My favourite quote of the piece, though, has to be, "There are moments when the sonic pointillism is notable, impressive even, in a dry kind of way". Have you listened to yourself recently?

From start to finish the review read like one long bitchy attack on a band who you feel had the cheek to join your elite set of alternative music makers. It's not a private club that can let Talk Talk in, but not Radiohead (incidentally, is that the Talk Talk who made the soundscapes of *Laughing Stock* and *Spirit Of Eden* or the sub-Duran Duran pomp disco of their first single and album?).

Radiohead have, over the past eight years, produced some of the finest music of any kind. They have stretched boundaries, changed attitudes and minds, and shown music lovers the door to a whole new world of 'alternative' sounds. They have never once pretended, however, that they are anything more than a rock band, playing the music that they want to play for people who want to listen to it. It's only people like Ian Penman who have chosen to place them on a pedestal and now seem to be thoroughly enjoying throwing stones at them until they are knocked off it again.

I am still trying to find my feet in this alternative world that has been opened up to me by *The Wire* over the past 12 months. Don't slam the door in my face and tell me I'm not welcome.

Pete Aldridge London

Ian Penman got closer to the mark than other critics who are so consistently influenced by the shrewd, tight grip of the business, marketing and promotional team that surrounds Radiohead.

Radiohead are sometimes good, sometimes very good and only ever avant garde if you compare them with Boyzone. If you have a reasonable knowledge of various forms of contemporary music, and are in your middle years, then you'll know that they could also, sometimes, be considered as OK, all right or even mediocre.

Their business team doggedly promote, protect and

uphold a ridiculously hallowed image of them for obvious gain.

Those of you who are still in any doubt might like to remember that Yorke recently collaborated with karaoke queen 'PJ Smith' (who deserves an honorary place of her own for copying, parrot-fashion, the style, attitude and even vocal phrasing of Patti Smith). Original? Hardly.

Soly Zacharian by email

Minor aggravation

Please thank Barry Witherden for his kind comments regarding my appearance on Panicstepper's new CD *Agro Jazz* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 208). It might be worth noting, despite his charming comments on my "subversion of the electric keyboard", that I played grand piano on that occasion.

Steve Beresford London

Rival Dinasties

Re: DiN Label lore (*The Wire* 207). I wonder if Ian Boddy and Chris Carter, et al are aware of another electronica label called Din? It's a Berlin based label, and there's a discography at www.circonium.de/music/din.html.

They released the early Arovane 12"s "io" and "icol diston" (from 1998, the former being his debut release) and the "amx" 12" (co-released with Fat Cat, 1999) and his debut album on CD from 2000, *Ato Scrap*. Along with these, a Pole 12" ("Raum Eins"/"Raum Zwei") was released in 1998. Their first release was in 1997, which I'm pretty sure predates the DiN stuff. It's really lovely stuff, the kind of glitchy, slightly dub-influenced cold electronica you'd expect from these artists. Nevertheless, I rather like the stuff on the DiN sampler CD you gave to subscribers last month.

Peter Hollo by email

Fallen into neglect

I wanted to point out a couple of things regarding Stephen Malkmus's Invisible Jukebox (*The Wire* 205). 1. Malkmus said, "No one gets rich sounding like The Fall." The fact is, Malkmus DID wind up getting rich from ripping off The Fall. Actually, I don't know what Malkmus would consider 'rich', but the fact is, Pavement sold a lot more albums than Mark E Smith's

band ever has. And the record that put Malkmus on the map and cemented his career (*Slanted And Enchanted*) is a blatant rip-off of The Fall, right down to the sleeve artwork. And, despite Mike Barnes's comments to the contrary, The Fall 'influenced' a great deal of Malkmus's output after his debut album. 2. Malkmus seemed annoyed by Smith's comments about Pavement stealing from The Fall. As I recall, though, Smith's anger wasn't originally necessarily spurred by the theft itself — it was a result of Malkmus giving interviews and citing loads of bands as influences, and neglecting to even mention The Fall.

Marc McDonald Fort Worth, USA

Residential ratings

Congratulations on The Residents Primer (*The Wire* 204), the descriptive reviews of their many albums were colourful and enticing. Hopefully this will help generate some new fans for a band whose early years were a series of milestones that put them up there with other legends like Faust, Zappa, Beefheart, Sun Ra and Can.

Another name that should without doubt be on that 'godlike' list is Nurse With Wound. Over the years Steve Stapleton has released some of the most original, outlandish, funny, surreal, nightmarish and freaky music ever.

So please, a Primer on the Nurse would be great. Other treasures I would love to see unearthed for your readers are Foetus, Biota, Renaldo And The Loaf, the first Kraftwerk album (a total must have), Annexus Quam, Guru Guru (early), Kalahari Surfers, This Heat, Wiseblood and Video-Aventures.

Jay Harper London

Corrections

Issue 208 In the Prix Ars Electronica Bite, we forgot to credit the photos of Oval (Sebastian Mayer) and Ryoji Ikeda (Olly Hewitt). In Soundcheck, the correct name for Thomas Köner and Asmus Tietchens's new project on Die Stadt is Kontakt Der Jünglinge, not Kontakte Der Jünglinge. In the Directory, the Bridge label, which released George Crumb's *Zeitgeist* CD, is distributed in the UK by Koch International, not Complete as stated.

Issue 207 In the Boomerang column, the photo of Mark E Smith should have been credited to Pictorial Press. □

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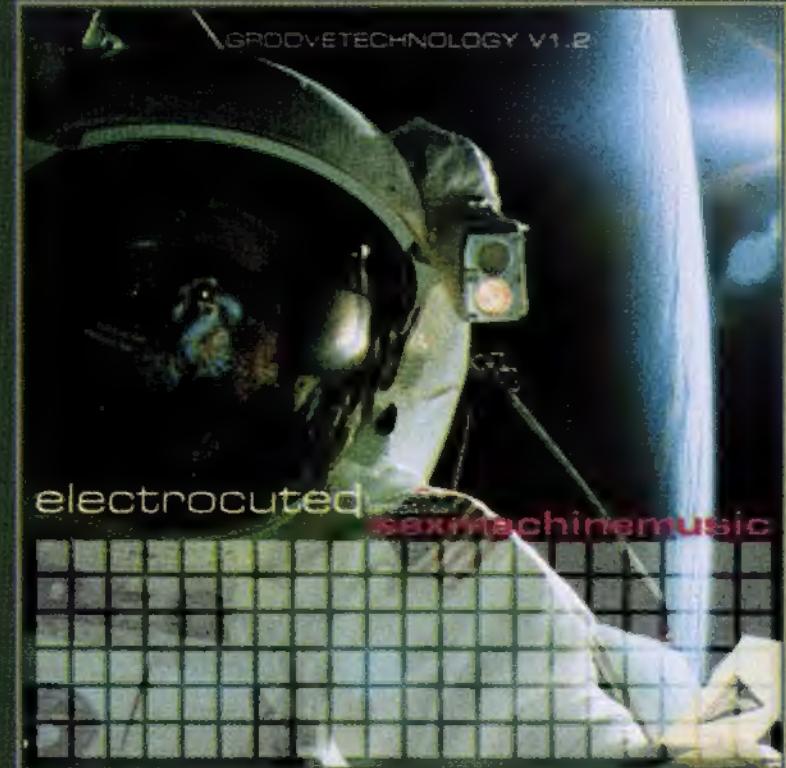
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The lure of 'a beautiful place in the country' can be irresistible to even the most computer-bound of musicians – the desire to evoke a digital approximation of Walden Pond. Now that we've lived with the technology long enough, it seems as if electronic music has discovered the freedom to evolve backwards: to regress from space age futurism and abstract dystopias towards a more bucolic, faux naïf kind of music. You can hear it in the electronica idylls of Boards Of Canada, or in a host of artists who are exploiting the revival of interest in British folk music by manipulating frail acoustic sounds on their hard drives.

Chief among this group is Kieran Hebden, a 23 year old from London, whose latest album as Four Tet, *Pause*, presents a delicately eclectic mix of treated guitars, psaltries, kotos and hazy field recordings in HipHop-influenced environments. "When I'm in the countryside, I want to hear really electronic music," he explains in his flat/studio in North London. "When I'm in town, it's there I want to hear live music. I want the sound to contradict the visuals a lot of the time."

The piles of vinyl that clutter the room are testament to Hebden's wide-ranging enthusiasms: Kate Rusby sits next to Ludacris; John Surman next to new chart two-step by Sticky and what he claims is a "psychedelic bouzouki" record by The Forum Quorum. His musical career began somewhat less expansively, however, playing Ramones covers at 15 in his group Fridge. Soon invigorated by the 'anything goes' flare up of Riot Grrrl and the similar DIY adventurousness of both post-rock and Jungle, the trio secured a deal with Trevor 'Underdog' Jackson's Output label and recorded their singles and albums during school holidays.

The Four Tet project started when Hebden went to university in Manchester, bought a computer and began delving into more esoteric musics. "We were quite disappointed with students in general, so we

decided we'd make our own effort to be bohemian," he says, with unusual candour. "I went out and bought a pile of jazz records, read a bit of Jack Kerouac and all that sort of crap. But I remember the day when Sam [Jeffers, Fridge's drummer] came home with Alice Coltrane's *Journey In Satchidananda*. It had everything. From that moment, we knew that was the direction we were going in."

The resulting records – Fridge's third LP *Eph* (Go! Beat, 1999), Four Tet's debut single "Thirtysixtwentyfive" (Output, 1998) and album *Dialogue* (Output, 1999) – were broadly successful fusions of cosmic jazz with undulating motorik rhythms and contemporary electronic techniques. Immersed in Don Cherry and Ornette Coleman, Hebden nevertheless remained sanguine.

"A lot of what I was interested in was so wrapped up in the Black Power movement in New York in the late 60s and early 70s. Being a little middle class kid from London, if you've got any sense you quickly realise there's a whole side to this music you couldn't possibly touch on. I wasn't going to get into the mindset of these records. I'd read the sleeve notes that John Coltrane wrote on *Ascension* and think, 'That's brilliant', but I'd also think, 'It's not for me'. There was a point of taking this political, spiritual, passionate music and stripping it down and thinking, 'All right, what are the little technical ideas that we can rip off? That we can incorporate into our music without showing disrespect or making a horrendous pastiche'. But I also wanted to bring it back to the world, the way HipHop takes kids back to old soul records."

It sounds rather sterile in its calculation, but Hebden successfully replaced the emotional core with something more personal: a faintly melancholic, unashamedly 'pretty' grasp of melody which provides a continuous thread through his rapidly accumulated

and largely impressive body of work. Besides Four Tet and Fridge, he even pre-empted the electro revival with a computer game-sampling 7" as Joshua Falken ("Falken's Maze", Go! Beat, 1998) and wised up to the underground HipHop boom by recording a still unreleased collaboration with Anti-Pop Consortium's Priest. *Pause*'s invocations of folk, meanwhile, began as "sort of a joke".

"It was the least obvious thing at the time, I suppose," he shrugs. "I was finding cheap folk records and thinking, 'Those are nice'. But I started getting pissed off. When I got into free jazz, a whole universe opened up for me with a million great records, but here I was looking for something that I quickly found didn't exist. It had to be a way of working that a folk act would never consider. I wanted it to be militantly electronic – I was listening more to Matmos and stuff like that."

Matmos's deconstruction of Americana on *The West* provides a useful Transatlantic correlative to *Pause*. It's Hebden's basic dissatisfaction with the traditional forms that gives the album its freshness, while his awe of cosmic jazz never quite allowed *Dialogue* to transcend its influences. There's a mischievousness here, too – a recent radio mix found Hebden planting a Jay-Z a cappella into the middle of some drowsy pastoral strums. And the sunshine atmospherics of *Pause* were designed late at night in London between DJ slots, suggesting that a retreat to the hinterlands (as with Boards Of Canada) isn't likely just yet.

"I haven't got interested in folk music the way I did in jazz. I didn't want to get interested in farmers and school fayres, ceilidhs – none of that. I really like some of the sounds on these records and can imagine them in a different context," he smiles, "but I don't want to go and do jigs on a Saturday night." □

Pause is out now on Domino

Four Tet

Jigs and reel to reels. By John Mulvey

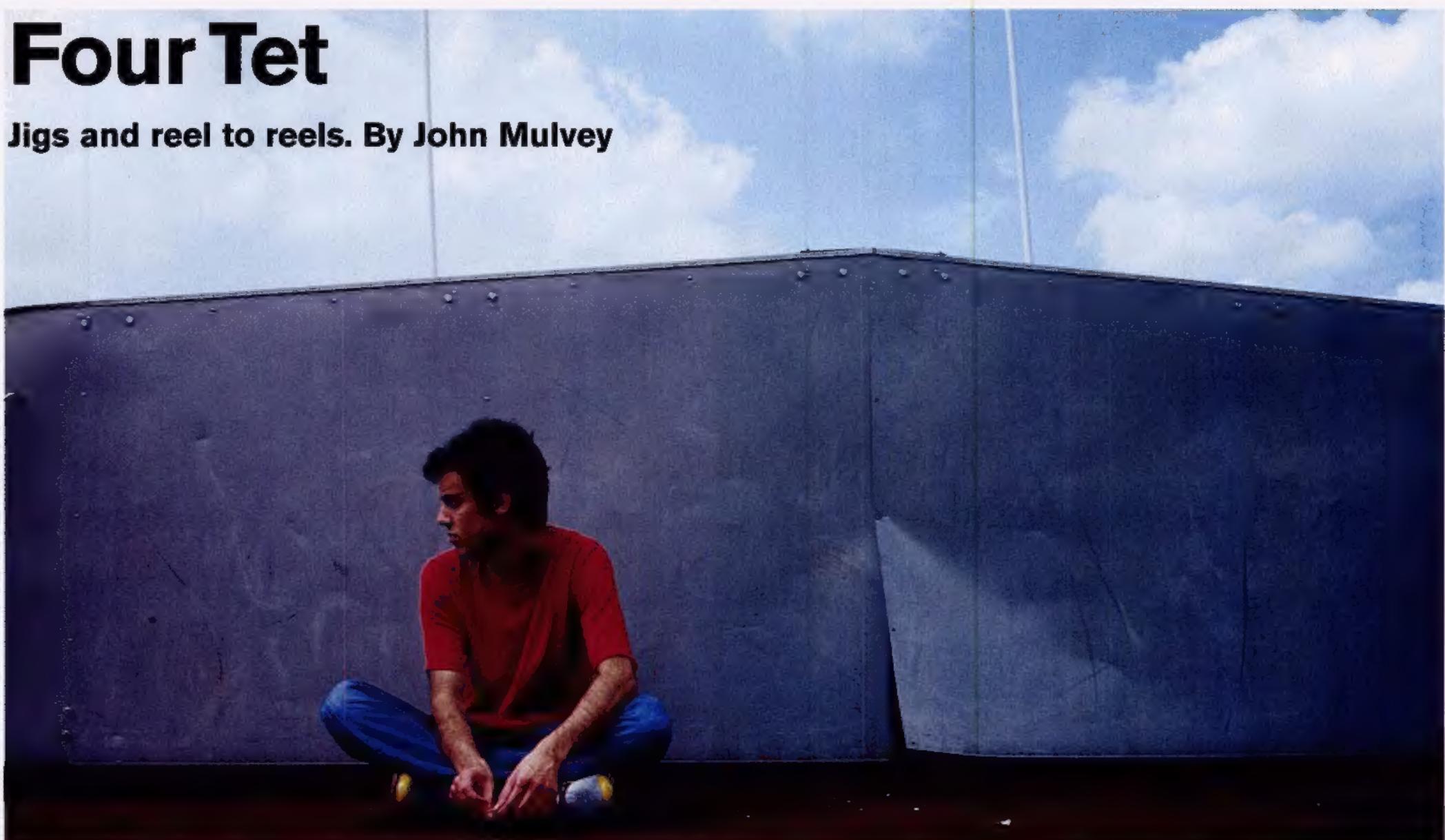


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Oren Ambarchi

Australian beauty. By Will Montgomery

"A lot of what I do is tricking the machinery to do what it's not supposed to do," says Oren Ambarchi, the Sydney based experimental guitarist who has been extremely active at the interface that's been established over the past couple of years between improvisation and radical electronica. Still only 32, Ambarchi has already covered much ground. I met him in London at the start of his first European tour, and a rundown of some of those he was about to perform or record with in the coming weeks gives an idea of the range of his concerns: improvisors such as Keith Rowe and Martin Klapper; drone pioneer Phill Niblock; Japanese New Music beacons Otomo Yoshihide and Sachiko M; and European electronica radicals such as Stillupsteypa and members of Mego outfits Fuckhead and Farmers Manual.

Although Ambarchi's musical background is in free jazz and avant rock, he's among those who in recent years have drifted towards 'quieter' ways of working. His most recent releases, whether solo or collaborations, are poised constructions of loops, drones and repetition. If there's still a substantial whiff of 1990s Zorn-orbit fuzz and hum to his sound, it remains a minor note in comparison to the warm, blurred edge textures that interest him most. Yet despite the approachable sounds, his recent recordings – *insulation* (*Touch*), a collaboration with Martin Ng, *Reconnaissance* (*Staubgold*), and vinyl releases on Plate Lunch and ERS – all retain a claustrophobic atmosphere, and a feeling of angularity and incompleteness.

"I've been doing a new CD for *Touch* and it's got a lot of space," says Ambarchi. "Looping silence, and then punching in ideas over the silence. I like the idea of it not having the attack of a guitar. Listening to it is almost like filling in the blanks. I hear the conclusion that doesn't actually happen. I'm calling it *Suspension*, because a lot of it is notes with nothing else around them, and then they stop and there's silence."

He's not alone, of course, in his movement towards smaller gestures: it has been apparent in the work of several younger European improvisors, and in developments such as 'lowercase sound' and Japanese onkyo. "I remember listening to Bernhard Günter a few years ago," he says. "It was almost like punk. A lot of people now are really starting to appreciate people like Morton Feldman. And I adore Alvin Lucier. I don't think he's appreciated enough. It's quite scientific, but the end result is absolutely gorgeous."

Ambarchi's family are Sephardic Jews from Iraq. Ambarchi was brought up in Sydney, where he still lives. As a teenager, while he was "being a jazz snob", as he puts it (using John Zorn's famous putdown), and turning himself into a free jazz drummer, Ambarchi simultaneously developed a passion for Jewish mysticism.

"I looked like a rabbi behind the drum kit at the time," he says. "It must have been pretty weird to see that in Sydney, of all places. I didn't really fit in at school, and I was getting into all this exotic, spiritual Impulse! jazz. I listened to Coltrane all day. I started reading a lot of Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah, and before I knew it I just took it on."

This intense religious involvement continued for some five years and took him to New York, to study at a Brooklyn yeshiva (orthodox Jewish school). There he would study theology by day and then take off to see the likes of Cecil Taylor by night. And it was the outer reaches of improvised music from where his decisive inspiration eventually came.

"I saw Keiji Haino in 1991 many, many times," he says. "I was just so inspired that someone had a vision that was totally his own. It wasn't a technical thing in a jazz sense. I decided there and then, I'm going to come back and play guitar."

Around the same time, he met John Zorn and was invited to play at the 1993 Radical Jewish Culture festival. Although he had only a year or so of guitar

experience, Zorn soon had him playing with top-flight improvisors such as Fred Frith and Ikue Mori. Back in Sydney, Ambarchi formed the Japanese-influenced punk outfit Phlegm with drummer Robbie Avenaim. He and Avenaim also set up the What Is Music? festival – now a largescale three week event and a fixture on the global avant garde musical calendar.

His music, he says, took another decisive turn when he began playing with improvisors Jim Denley, Stevie Wishart and Rik Rue in the mid-90s, plugging in to the small but resourceful Sydney improvising network. In 1999 he and Avenaim recorded the forceful duo album *Alter Rebbe's Nigun* for Zorn's Radical Jewish Culture series on Tzadik. Turning down the opportunity to record in New York, they chose to keep it close to home. "We wanted to record it in our own environment," he explains. "We did everything ourselves. We were playing trumpets and acoustic basses, and it came out sounding really weird because it was from this enclosed environment in Sydney. The melodies on that CD come from the music that we used to sing for the rituals that we did in yeshiva. The original melody was based on the Alte Rebbe's Nigun [a piece composed by a late 18th/early 19th century Jewish religious thinker]. We would only be allowed to sing it if the head Rebbe had started singing it. It really affected me."

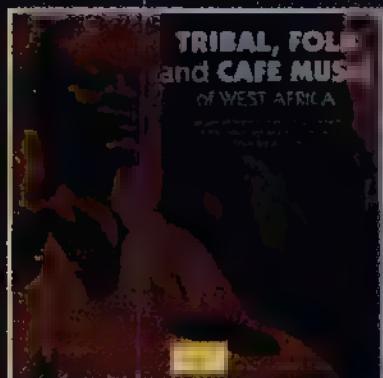
At this point, a sudden dearth of gigs in Sydney sent him back to the bedroom, where he developed a sound in response to European electronica, particularly the new digital sounds emerging from Vienna. "All of a sudden I was on my own, with time to do things," he says. "I just started experimenting at home with the guitar. That was just when Mego was starting and it was inspiring. And I just said to myself, 'I'm going to try to do something like that on the guitar and see how far I can take it. Just limit myself to that and see what I can do'." □ Oren Ambarchi and Martin Ng's *Reconnaissance* is out now on *Staubgold*



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"When I am doing, I purposely try to squelch the analytical," divulges Chicago based cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm. "Personally I'm often drawn to the idea that fixed roles are limiting, but I do recognise that no matter how much I might want to be able to make any sound, the sounds a cello make will always have a certain timbre to them, and fighting this might not always be in the best interest of the music." Such a democratic and self-effacing outlook helps explain why Lonberg-Holm may be the most sought after cellist in the Windy City.

"I don't pretend to play in a consistent way from project to project. Anything that is recognisable from one thing to another is probably that thing I can't escape – me and my cello," he says. Yet despite his versatility, identifying Lonberg-Holm's singular stamp regardless of context is never difficult, whether heard slashing and burning against the tumultuous horns of Peter Brötzmann's Tentet, arching melancholy and picturesque lines in the introspective Boxhead Ensemble, serving up subdued counterpoints in Guillermo Gregorio's trio, sounding dry and esoteric in Pillow, or warm and lyrical in his latest tune-based incarnation Terminal 4. Furthermore, Lonberg-Holm has recently concentrated on string and horn arrangements for pop groups such as The Lofty Pillars and Manischewitz, to go along with a host of infrequent and one-off projects with many of the finest European improvisors when they stop off in town, leaving very little downtime in a relatively hectic schedule.

"Sometimes it might look like I have no discrimination, but it's not true. I regularly turn down or make clear my disinterest in a lot of what goes on around. When I do choose to play with somebody, it's because I really enjoy the process and the results."

Born in Delaware, Lonberg-Holm was initially on course for a career in classical music, having attended the Juilliard academy while still in high school, followed by two years at the Manhattan School. But feeling disillusioned by the high-handed attitudes of the classical industry, he stopped playing cello completely.

"A primary reason for quitting the cello and classical music 20 years ago was that I found a lot of the trappings of the elite to be totally phoney," he explains. "You get these pompous guys who don't really have a vision or much love or anything close to the chops they claim, pronouncing themselves 'geniuses' and being very pleased with their greatness. They say nice things about people who say nice things about them, and close in the wagons against anyone else. Meanwhile a lot of really interesting and interested people make incredible music that not only works at this juncture but also provides a source for the future. They work every day in a serious and committed way but don't go around talking in press release-ese, and these are the people I want to know and work with and for. Real new music, where people are doing things with integrity and intensity, is everywhere."

After a few years of playing bass in rock groups and working on tape music, Lonberg-Holm returned to the cello and soon began to make headway in New York's downtown scene leading his own group Peep, and working with God Is My Co-Pilot, Anthony Coleman and, on a number of occasions, John Zorn's Cobra. About six years ago, however, family matters necessitated the relocation to Chicago, a move that Lonberg-Holm was reluctant to make at first.

"I kicked and screamed the whole way here, and every third day for the first six months threatened to move back to New York. After I settled down, and realised how many great and serious lovers of the music there were here, I haven't looked back again. Being here has taught me a lot about the world in a way I never saw it living in my little village buried in the most self-obsessed city I know of."

The years in Chicago have been extremely fruitful for Lonberg-Holm. His albums include a solo set, the textural tour de force *Personal Scratch* (Eighth Day), as well as *Site-Specific* (Explain), a series of duos with 12 different guitarists including Jim O'Rourke, Kevin Drumm and US Maple's Todd Rittmann, for which each

track was recorded in the guitarists' respective homes. In addition, he has formed a prolific partnership with like-minded percussionist Michael Zerang, recording as a duo (*35 Grapes* on Box Media), and subsequently as a trio with vocalist Jaap Blonk (*First Meetings* on Buzz), trumpeter Axel Dörner (*Claque* on Meniscus) and pianist Sten Sandell (*Disappeared* on Nuscope). These projects and at least a dozen others underline Lonberg-Holm's mercurial prowess as an improvisor.

"Why I am attracted to improvised music isn't very clear to me," he says. "Probably the more open contexts allow more freedom to establish or invent one's identity and one's relationship with other players and instruments. Part of the attraction of the ad hoc formation is that, to me, only in this kind of situation can real free improvising take place. When I play all the time with the same people, we move past improvising and into a zone where we have become a specific ongoing piece – at least in my mind. I like this situation just fine, but since certain givens begin to take shape, the requirements of the fully open state become less important. If you take seriously the idea that improvising is what you do when you aren't sure what will work or you don't understand the situation, then you have a harder time calling your solution an improvisation the second time around – and definitely the 200th."

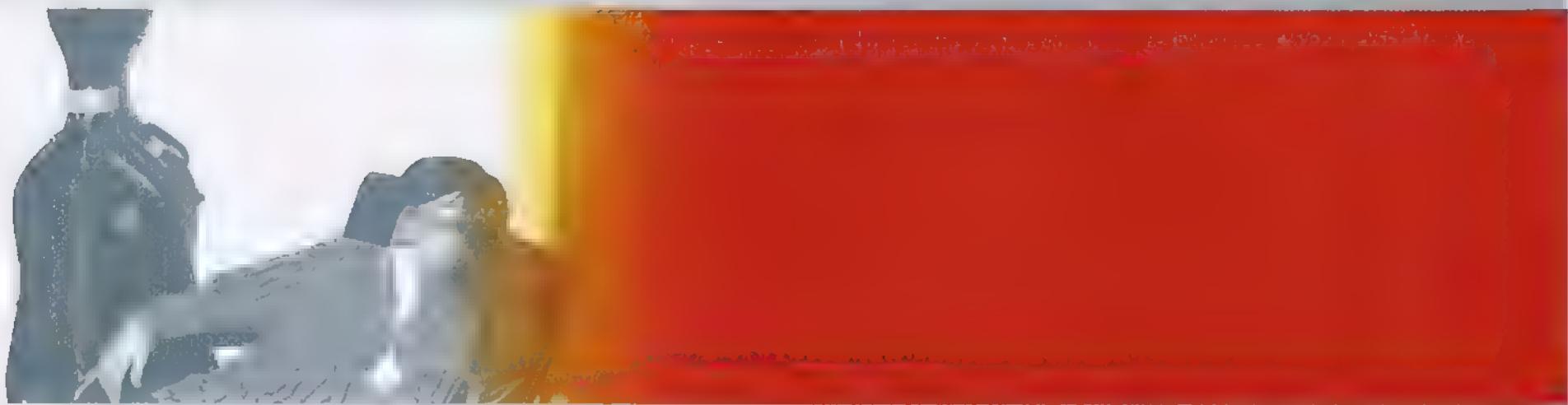
With such a large discography, many musicians would feel content to rest upon their laurels, but Lonberg-Holm is still seeking, trying to find the crux of who he is, both as a musician and an individual.

"Improvising has taught me a lot, but so has writing, transcribing, playing written parts, improvising within restrictions, and trying to figure out what people I'm working with are trying to express. As for learning about myself," Lonberg-Holm grins, "I think I have so far to go, that I can't even begin to talk about it." □

Terminal 4's Terminal 4 is out this month on Truckstop. Sandell/Lonberg-Holm/Zerang's Disappeared is out now on Nuscope. A new Boxhead Ensemble CD is due out on Atavistic later this year

Fred Lonberg-Holm

Squelching the analytical. By Jon C Morgan





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John Hudak

Time passes slowly. By Jim Haynes

Amplifying the tiniest tones and sounds of his environment, Brooklyn sound artist and poet John Hudak has been quietly crafting an extensive catalogue of haikus and minimalist recordings. "My perceived connection between haiku and my sound work," explains Hudak, "is that I enjoy looking into the smaller sounds, the ones most people can't hear, don't hear, or don't listen to. So my interest is in clarifying, filtering, framing these sounds to make them audible. If you consider a definition of haiku as 'a record of a moment keenly perceived which in some way links Nature with human nature', you should get the impression that I perceive no separation between poetry and sound."

Just as the haiku – a Japanese traditional poetry form made up of 17 syllables – consists of a very concise, pre-existing syllabic structure while building a complex metaphor out of a mere fragment of language, so Hudak controls his sound pieces within the parameters of minimalism. He manipulates a singular source, mostly field recordings, but sometimes found sounds, to arrive at an extended, yet stripped down sonorous abstraction. "My attraction to minimalism stems from the desire to present one idea that could be seen and understood in the clearest way by all members of an audience," he continues. "If you present a multitude of ideas, you tend to confuse your audience, or at least lead them to feelings that may not have been intended."

Hudak is careful to choose sounds that are almost universally evocative. Yet, at the same time, they are so closely tied to his personal realm as to nullify any assumed universality. *Brooklyn Bridge* (released on Shirocoal in 1998) and *Highway* (issued this year on Edition...) could easily revolve around the American thematics of leisure, automotive culture, mass transportation, or road rage. But he addresses their semiotics from the position of his own power of observation. He asserts, "My choosing the Brooklyn Bridge and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway [for *Highway*] as sound source material has nothing to do

with their place in automotive culture. Rather, I am exploring the sound environment of my immediate world: the Brooklyn Bridge is a defining symbol of New York City and is visible from my window, while the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway runs underneath my apartment... My aesthetic aim is devoid of any socio-political overtones or constraints."

Hudak's interest in poetry and minimal sound pieces began in the early 80s, while attending the University of Delaware, where he studied creative writing, imagist poetry and performance art. Describing that period's output as "static tableaux", his early performances combined aspects of dance, sculpture, photography and music. They would consist of him completing a simple action over an extended piece of time, with the gradual evolution of a sound piece in the background. It wasn't until much later that he discovered the connections between haiku and imagist verse.

While holding down a position as regional co-ordinator for the Haiku Society of America, he toiled in the relative obscurity of the noise/tape exchange subculture, yet ended up producing an immense catalogue of nearly 40 cassette-only releases. *Pond*, released on the Japanese label Meme in 1998, was Hudak's first CD. It initiated a flurry of material which continues to this day. After filtering and timestamping hydrophone recordings of aquatic insects, Hudak limited himself to using a small, upper register frequency range of those treated sounds to construct *Pond*. Focusing on six or seven buzzing drones, he composed a gossamer collage with various combinations of similar tones, each gradually fading in the gentle waning of an extended delay pattern, before another would emerge.

Hudak has maintained these self-imposed restrictions in the construction of his repetitive miasmic drones. The aforementioned *Highway* and *Brooklyn Bridge* are notably different from other traffic recordings, which he finds "rather harsh and unpleasant to listen to". Using contact microphones, he uncovered two distinctly different textures previously buried within the

ubiquitous din of car culture. *Brooklyn Bridge* swells with a magnetic hum around the resonant properties of the bridge itself, as it is 'played' by the traffic constantly rushing over it. *Highway* is a much quieter affair, and elicited an honorary mention in the Digital Music category of this year's Prix Ars Electronica competition. Here he situates a complex network of gritty percolations and electrical wisps at a very low mastering volume, to give a miniaturised impression of the highway's rhythmic sounds.

Hudak has taken part in online sound installations, such as *Still Life* (at www.nomadnet.org/), where every three minutes a photo of his dining room becomes coloured with a palette derived from Van Gogh's painting *Starry Night*, as it is transformed into an audio signal. Most recently, he created an MP3 audio piece, *snow*, derived from recordings of snowflakes hitting a windowsill (66.24.70.235/john_hudak_.html). But one of his more promising plans is *Helen Marie: Reinterpretations*, a collection of reworked versions of *Don't Worry About Anything, I'll Talk To You Tomorrow*, (which stems from the posthumous discovery of an answering message from Hudak's mother) featuring Francisco López, Marc Behrens, Leif Elggren and other fellow contemporary minimalists. As he explains, "This is not a remix album. I call it that, because that is the closest thing that most people can relate to. The project involved an early version of *Don't Worry About Anything...* that I had given to Kevin Wienke at Alluvial Recordings along with the final master. I wanted him to have an idea of how the piece had progressed through its many versions. For this double CD, everyone was provided a copy of that early iteration, to process and manipulate in any way they liked. My original release was based on an answering machine message I found from my mother, who had passed away, speaking the title words to me not long before she died. I reduced these words in the same way that I reduced the highway sounds, so what is left, in a sense, is the essence." □ *Helen Marie: Reinterpretations* is out this month on Alluvial. Website: www.johnhudak.net

Bitstream

The heat is on: This year's second Detroit Electronic Music Festival (DEMF) ran into trouble when creative director Carl Craig was summarily dismissed two weeks before the event, held at the end of May, by organisers Pop Culture Media. The reason? Apparently Craig had not secured the return of all 73 artist contracts, as required by the Detroit City authorities, who bankroll the festival. That, at least, was the version put out by Carol Marvin of PCM. However, one of the more likely rumours doing the rounds since the sacking has it that Craig and Marvin didn't see eye to eye. Now the 'Detroit Techno community' have set up a Website in support of Craig. For info, go to: www.laresistedetroit.com >>> The heat is off: Leonardo Arts, the international arts organisation responsible for the Leonardo Music Journal, edited by

electroacoustic composer Nicolas Collins, has survived a lawsuit from Leonardo Finance. The venture capital firm, owned by Transasia Corp, claimed \$1 million in respect of trademark infringement, pleading similarity of names had caused them to lose e-business. But the judges at a court in Nanterre, France threw the case out. Read the verdict at mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/isast/lawupdate.html, set up for their defence fund by the 30 year old Leonardo Arts, who trademarked their name this year >>> Finnish minimalists Pan Sonic and imaginary soundtrack composer Barry Adamson have teamed up with Icelandic mavericks Kitchen Motors on an album for Edda, one of Iceland's leading eclectic labels. It's due this August. Website: www.edda.is >>> Fresh from curating this year's Meltdown Festival at London's South Bank, Robert Wyatt has a clutch of solo CDs spanning his post-Soft Machine career reissued at midprice by Hannibal. All have been remastered and in some cases resequenced, with enhanced CD content including video footage.

The titles are Rock Bottom (1974), Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard (1975), Old Rottenhat (1985), Dondestan (1991) and Sleep (1997). His five CD box set EPs, mopping up various singles, maxis and rare tracks, gets a second run. Completing this month's Wyatt fest, American label Cuneiform has Smoke Signals, a live album by Wyatt's Matching Mole, compiled from their 1972 US tour >>> Los Angeles sound artist Brandon LaBelle and Montréal musician Christof Migone have co-edited a book and CD called Writing Aloud: The Sonics Of Language (Errant Bodies Press: otic@earthlink.net), collecting writings, interviews and photography that explore the interface of the voice and pure sound. Sound poetry, glossolalia and yodelling are scrutinised by Achim Wollscheid, Lionel Marchetti, Vito Acconci, Alvin Lucier and David Dunn. The CD features Alexandre St-Onge, Charles Amirkhanian, Yasunao Tone, John Duncan, Gregory Whitehead, Michel Chion and others. Fans of "the sonicity of utterance", in the editors' words, have never had it so good. THE TRAWLER



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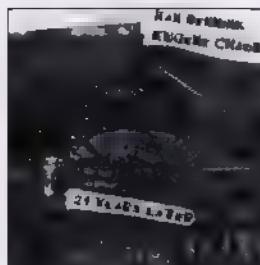
CD LR 318 CHRISTINE WODRASCKA/ RAMON LOPEZ AUX PORTES DU MATIN

The third CD by Ramon Lopez on Leo Records whose previous release *Songs of the Spanish Civil War* was an unprecedented success in France. This time Ramon performs live at Instants Chavires with a brilliant piano player Christine Wodrascka known for her work with Dennis Charles, Fred Frith, Joelle Leandre, etc. The music is an endless succession of taking chances, walking the tightrope without a safety net while painting a vision of their poetic universe.



CD LR 319 AKI TAKASE LE CAHIER DU BAL

A debut CD on Leo Records by a Japanese-born and Berlin-resident piano player famous for her duos with Maria Joao, David Murray, Alexander von Schlippenbach and other top musicians. *Le Cahier du Bal* is inspired by the dancer Anzu Furukawa. The result is music that touches on dance in every way, in its conception and execution, a dance of mind and body that revels in the sense of free physical play. Notes by Stuart Brooker, poetry by Evan Parker.



CD LR 324 HAN BENNINK/EUGENE CHADBOURNE 21 YEARS LATER

21 Years Later is an extended improvisation by Han Bennink and Eugene Chadbourne which also includes a selection of songs. Just like the Crescent Special the duo of Han Bennink and Eugene Chadbourne rolls on through the musical night, stopping every now and then to take on some passengers. This is a recording of a very special night in Atlanta, Georgia. Han puts Eugene in a mellow mood, and when Dr. Chadbourne starts singing you don't know whether you want to smile or cry.



CD LR 325 PANDELIS KARAYORGIS TRIO BLOOD BALLAD

The fourth CD by Pandelis on Leo Records, this time with his trio: Nate McBride on bass and Randy Peterson on drums. A key figure in Boston's under-40 generation of adventurous improvisers, pianist Pandelis displays a novel renovation of concepts developed by Lennie Tristano and Thelonius Monk. Some music on this CD, however, was written with Billy Strayhorn and his music in mind, one piece is a tribute to Duke Ellington on the 100th anniversary of his birth. "Be warned, this music doesn't reveal all its secrets on first hearing." (Art Lange)



CD LR 326 EVAN PARKER/PATRICK SCHEYDER

How has such an encounter been possible? The French piano player Patrick Scheyder is known as an interpreter of Chopin and a promoter of a festival of classical music. As Philippe Renaud writes in his liner notes: "Here, something magic happens... The more I listen to this record, the more I remember the improbable concert (the announced marriage between Coltrane and Chopin)." And what about Evan Parker? Well, Evan is at the pinnacle of his musical development and we are very lucky to be able to hear his music.



CD LR 327 DOLMEN ORCHESTRA MINOTRAUMA

The emergence of the Dolmen Orchestra in the south of Italy has been a miracle. Conducted by Nicola Pisani and featuring Yves Robert, the second project of the Orchestra is dedicated to the myth of the Minotaur — a mythological monster with bull's head and a human body, a result of an unnatural act of love — and in particular to the philosophical interpretation given to it by the Swiss writer Friedrich Durrenmatt. This second CD confirms that Italy enjoys two big bands of equal standing, the other one being the Italian Instabile Orchestra.

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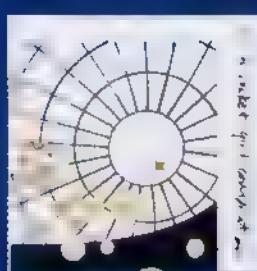


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Global Ear: Tallinn

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Andy Hamilton follows the musical signs along the Estonian capital's path to independence



Estonian troubadours: LinnaMuusikud, Arvo Pärt



Tallinn is a 20 minute hop, in a small turboprop, over the Baltic from Helsinki. I made the trip to Estonia's capital for the Jazzkaar, Europe's oldest jazz festival. My hotel, the Viru, is the haunt of Finnish vodka tourists, who arrive on the ferry and stay for the weekend, returning with luggage trolleys loaded with cheap Estonian liquor. On my last visit two years ago, I took the evening ferry from Helsinki and encountered a more committed class of vodka tourists, who take advantage of the duty free and sleep things off in their cabins on the return trip, without ever setting foot on Estonian soil.

The Jazzkaar began in 1949. Interrupted by periods of Soviet repression, it has been going strong since 1990, helmed by the indefatigable Anne Erm. In previous years, it has hosted artists such as Steve Lacy, Roscoe Mitchell, Dave Douglas and Thomas Chapin. This year's attractions are less starry perhaps, but no less engrossing. The main festival venue, Sakala Hall, was used in Communist times for political rallies, an irony too recent to be lost on the mainly local audience. The building might appear grandiose from the outside, in the monumental style popular with East European socialist regimes, but pay closer attention to the domestic fittings inside and the impression quickly crumbles. The small upstairs hall was the venue for the showstopping duo of clarinettist Claudio Puntin – whose magical *Yir* has just appeared on ECM – with Steffen Schorn on baritone and bass saxes. Main Hall highlights were the captivating Brazilian bebop synthesis of Eliane Elias, and Omar Sosa's incandescent Cuban jazz. Sosa has an unsurpassed ability to work the audience, but the pianist's hypnotic stage presence shouldn't mask the originality of his music. Django Bates, with Quiet Nights, impressed my Estonian friends as "the British John Zorn". Their enthusiastic outsider perspective almost persuaded me that his cut 'n' paste style really was postmodern subversion, with everything in quotation marks, rather than the work of a man who just can't stop cracking (musical) jokes.

The festival's Estonian entries included the folksy sax-accordion duo of Villu Veski and Tiit Kalluste. Kalluste's accordion is beguilingly reminiscent of Dino Saluzzi's bandoneon, supporting the claim on their recent *Sounds Of The Nordic Islands* CD (NCB) that the Baltic is "our Mediterranean of the North", open to all cultures. The duo also feature on the festival's own release, *Different Dreams 2*, alongside leading Estonian group Weekend Guitar Trio. Unfortunately the

latter weren't playing this year, but no swift survey of contemporary Estonian music would be complete without them. Their new CD *Animation* (Beg The Bug Records) draws on folk sources, though you have to listen hard to hear them amid the more evident influences of Robert Fripp, Derek Bailey and David Torn. Here melody takes second place to the textures generated by the three guitarists' loops, pedal and delay FX.

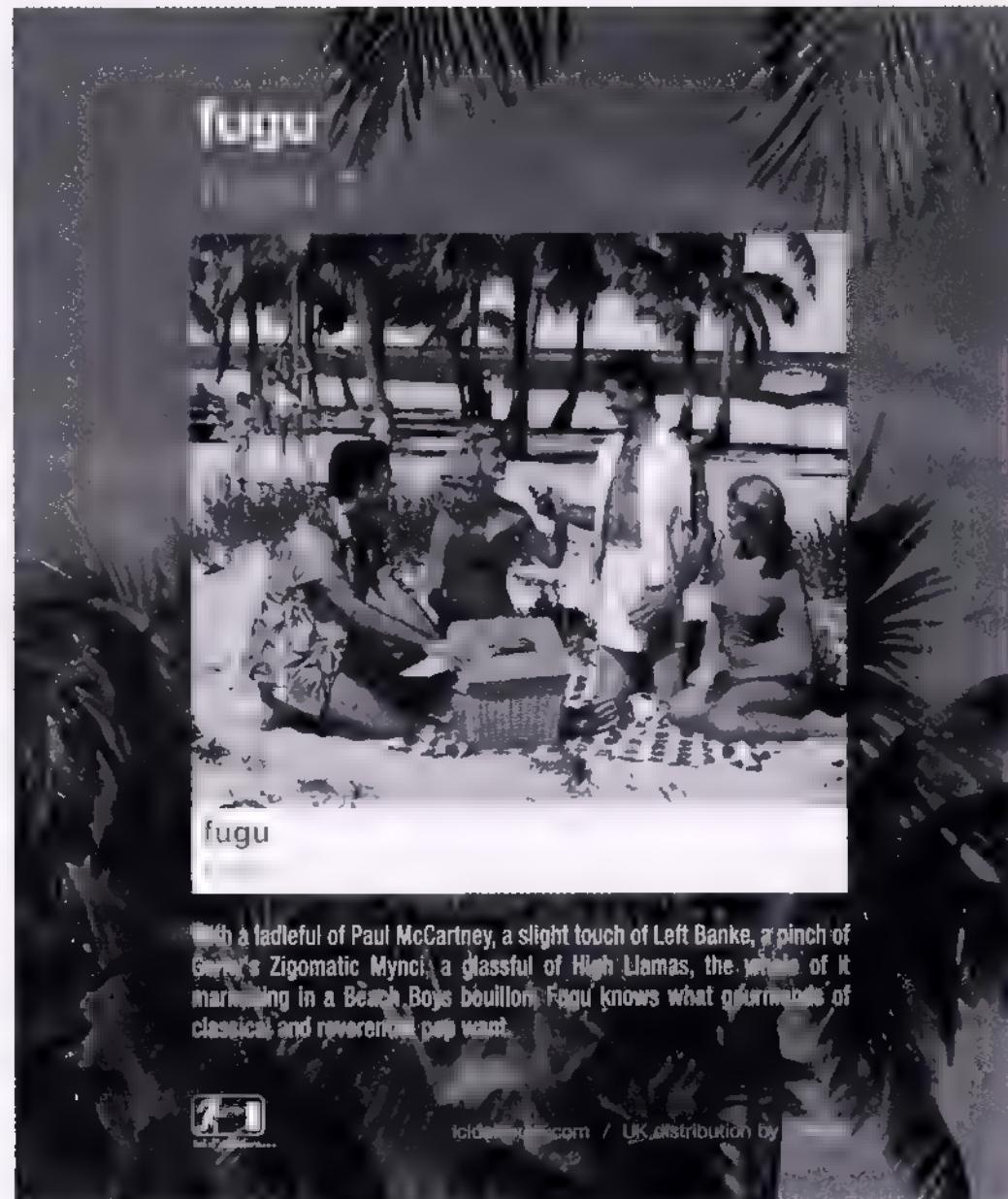
Though it's the size of the Netherlands, Estonia has only 1.5 million inhabitants, including half a million Russians. Estonia was free from 1918 to 1940, then oppressed under the Soviets, the Nazis and the Soviets again, and only regained its independence in 1991. Estonian music is best known abroad through its composers rather than its improvisors. Ironically, the Munich-based ECM label has done much to raise awareness of Estonia through its championing of composers Arvo Pärt, Veljo Tormis and younger compatriot Erkki-Sven Tüür. Pärt's *Tabula Rasa* appeared on ECM in 1984, becoming, with Keith Jarrett and Jan Garbarek, one of its big successes. Arvo Pärt is revered almost as a national hero, though he now lives in Germany and returns to his homeland only for short visits. His tintinnabuli style has acquired an earthier dimension, more eclectic but harder edged, though nothing representing his new direction has made it onto record yet. In the interim, ECM's commitment to Estonian music seemingly extends to attempting a canon formation paralleling its struggle for nationhood. The recent release *Neenia* consists of unpretentious and plangent pieces for string orchestra by Pärt's teacher Heino Eller (1887-1970). Eller's career was shaped by the forces of occupation; his *Lyric Suite* is dedicated to his wife, who died a violent death under the Nazis.

All Estonian composers including Pärt have been influenced by the choral tradition for centuries at the heart of Estonian culture. The first song festival was held in 1869, since which time choral forces can reach staggering numbers. For instance, the stage for the present festival holds 15,000 performers. No surprise, then, that the Song has accelerated Estonia's steps to independence. In 1988 huge crowds assembled for the Singing Revolution – an estimated 300,000 made up one gathering in Tallinn – to sing banned national songs. Yet for all its nationalist connotations, the choral tradition has a surprisingly Germanic origin. In the mid-19th century, German music supplanted the older, oral-based, call

and response style of Estonian 'regilaul'. Born in Tallinn in 1930, Veljo Tormis is a composer intent on preserving the regilaul along with the music of non-Estonian peoples from the border regions. His wonderful 1992 CD *Forgotten Peoples* (ECM) is part arrangement, part recomposition of the runic songs of the Livonian, Votian, Izhorian and other dying Baltic races. The 1999 album *Litanies To Thunder*, meanwhile, focuses on Estonian songs. "I do not use folksong, it is folksong that uses me," is Tormis's credo. He is not a lone believer. An Estonian tradition of sacred folksongs, with their almost oriental pentatonic melismas, is increasingly popular in all genres, including pop. I heard a rehearsal in a converted church by an ensemble called LinnaMuusikud. Translating as Town Musicians, their name carries connotations of medieval troubadours. They're the oldest group working within this sacred tradition, balancing quiet voices and little instruments to delicate effect.

Songs passed down through folk's oral traditions essentially keep the language alive. Estonian is a member of the small, exotic group of Finno-Ugric languages, which has led Tormis to describe its self-sufficient speakers as the "Red Indians of Europe". In contrast to that beleaguered image, from the 13th to the 17th century, Tallinn was a major port of the Hanseatic League, a link between East and West. Now the small, magical Old Town rises out of the Soviet drabness of the post-war New Town. With its 440,000 citizens, Tallinn today is booming – since my visit two years ago new buildings have made bridgeheads into the bleak New Town, CCTV has appeared, and the range of goods in shops is not so meagre. The crime rate, it would appear, is indexed to its economic success, with 28 Mafia style murders in the first months of 2001 alone. But even the minority Russian population has no desire for a return to the Soviet era. In music, traditions once preserved in aspic now have to fight for survival in the world marketplace. Now more than ever, the state is looking westwards, especially after winning the Eurovision Song Contest this year. Yet despite the euphoric local reaction, the £3 million bill makes it unlikely that Tallinn will follow tradition and host the event next year. The contest was never broadcast during the Soviet era because it was deemed to represent capitalist decadence. Perhaps the Communists had some taste after all. □

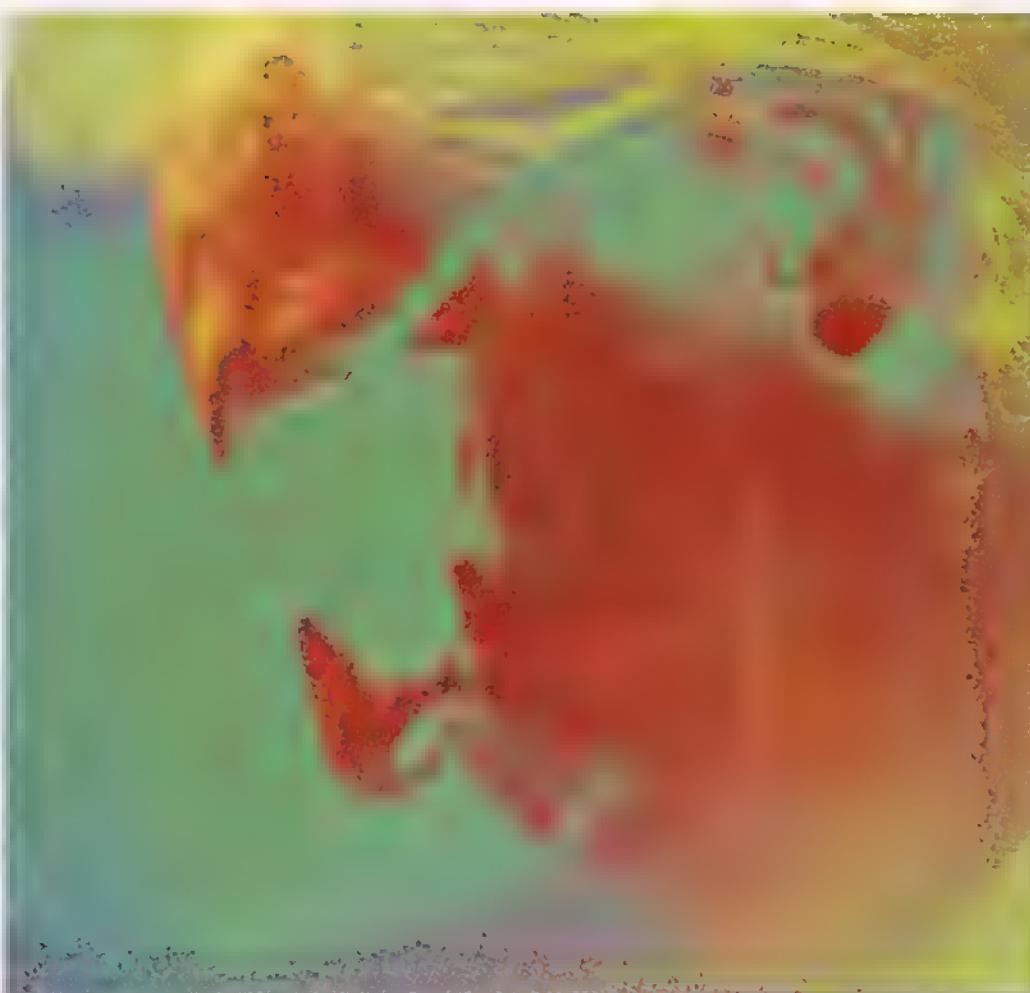
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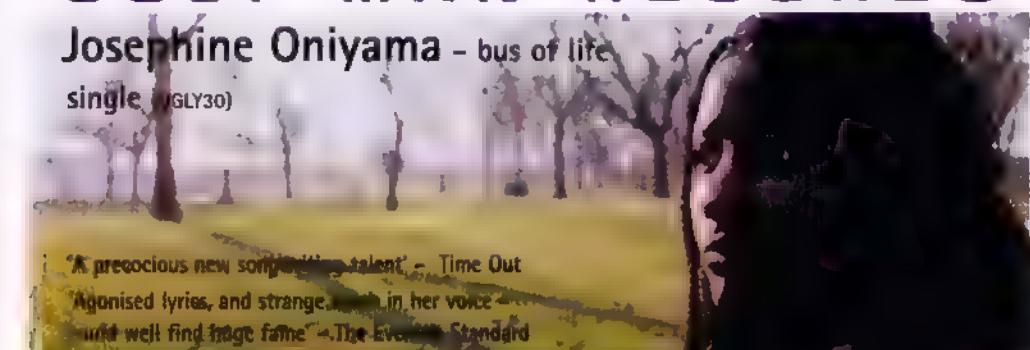
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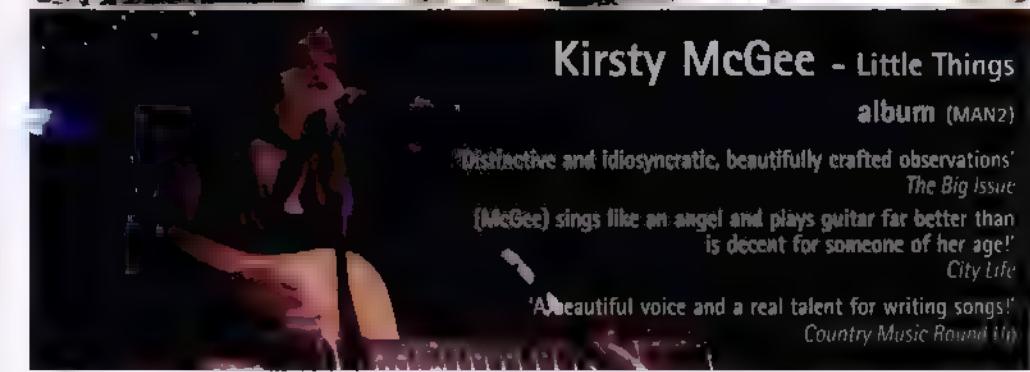
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RIGHT & BELOW : JAN JELINEK
(FARBEN, GRAMM)
BERLIN 2001



After radical makeovers by Vladislav Delay, Jan Jelinek, Isolée, Thomas Brinkmann, Ricardo Villalobos, Atom Heart and more, Chicago House has been reduced to its trifold essence of rhythm, soul and silence. Philip Sherburne pinpoints the heart of MicroHouse. Photos: Sebastian Mayer (Germany), Caroline Hayeur (Canada)

It crept up in a tinny whisper: "Thinner." Thus was the curse placed on the central character of Stephen King's horror novel of the same title. Having wronged a gypsy, the portly protagonist finds himself wasting away, dropping pounds in unruly piles like a DJ sheds spent vinyl. Notwithstanding the dubious merits of the novel, there's a Techno analogy to be drawn here. Perhaps the same curse was uttered at the swelling corpus of House music at some point two, three, or even five years ago, setting off a chain reaction through the genre, wherein it sloughed off extra pounds and shed its excess strings, histrionic vocals and swollen midrange. The curse first took a hold of House's German relations. Though they retained the clan's essential features – especially its kick drum and offbeat hi-hat – all the fat fell away from their hips and jutting collarbones. With time, however, the curse turned out to be a blessing, spawning a sound that wasn't so much emaciated as supple and lithe.

I heard this sound for the first time when I bought Perlon's *Superlongevity* compilation in 1999, shopping for records in Los Angeles with Mannequin Lung's Allen Avenessian – whose 1998 album *The Art Of Travel*, incidentally, had hinted at an as yet unimagined merger of minimal Techno with the deeper soul of House. Right from the off, it was evident that something different was happening on the Perlon doublepack. Dimbiman's "The Early Bird Hype", with its throbbing bass, severely clipped percussion and spooky falsetto warblings, shuffled along like an early Chicago track, but it was as if most of the parts had been scrubbed out. The structure – and it was all structure, nothing but a skeletal archetype of drums, bassline and a smattering of effects, rattling around an echoing expanse – had stayed the same, but newer, more unexpected sounds were imported, such as a shaker sample replacing the hi-hat. You had the strong impression that House had been stripped down to a trifold essence: rhythm, soul and silence.

It hadn't come out of nowhere, of course – in its reductionism, the sound shared a bloodline with Chain Reaction's blissed out minimalism (dubbed 'Heroin House' in a 1998 article by Simon Reynolds), but this

was punchier and groovier. It reached back to Matthew Herbert's clipped, cushioned romps, and the minimalist Chicago disco pioneered by the likes of Moodymann and Theo Parrish. Digging further into the catalogues of German labels like Klang Elektronik, Playhouse and subsequently Force Tracks, it was finally possible to see the forest for the trees – or perhaps a better metaphor, the desert for the cacti: a desiccated wilderness carefully guarding its vitality, shielding its fragile, verdant forms with prickly spines. And like a prickly pear, once you had managed to get at the juice, man, was it sweet.

This is not so much House as 'MicroHouse', I thought. MicroHouse captures not only the proportions of the music, but also its semi-underground status, positioned at odds with more traditional Deep House, to say nothing of the genre's even more mainstream, megaclub fare. Then, last summer, a curious thing happened: in the middle of their set at San Francisco's Deep House night Staple, DJ duo Mateo & Matos dropped Luomo's "Class". The Finnish producer Vladislav Delay had recently released the record to an almost uniformly ecstatic reception; his first take on vocal House had stunned an audience more accustomed to Delay's pulsating, steely grey soundscapes. Reactions ran from guilty pleasure for the more puritan avant Techno hardliners, to relief that at last the divide had been broken down between the worlds of 'Intelligent Dance Music' and unabashed dancefloor soul.

Luomo's *Vocalcity* album bears little relation to Vladislav Delay's previous work. Released last year by Force Tracks, the Force Inc imprint dedicated to a stripped down fusion of minimal dub Techno and relaxed House rhythms, the record bears a sticker reading: "Luomo – The Next Episode In House – prod by Vladislav Delay." If this is the kind of afterthought labels are likely to stick on records, fearing that their potential consumers might not get it, the assessment is not far off in describing the six sprawling, languid tracks clocking in at ten to 12 minutes apiece. Squelching bass and keyboard lines lay down a

RIGHT

- : THE PLAYHOUSE/ONGAKU/KLANG ELEKTRONIK HQ
FRANKFURT 2001
- : PETER KREMIER (LOSOUL)
FRANKFURT 2001
- : RAJKO MÜLLER (ISOLÉE)
FRANKFURT 2001

FAR RIGHT



BETWEEN



"If you strip the track down to the bone, you'll see the most important things, the things that make you want to dance, it's always the rhythm and the bass"

— Michael Mayer (Kompakt)

syncopated foundation, but the real action bubbles up from indiscernible depths – clicks and pops barely tethered to the rhythmic structure, aching sighs that suggest the birth of the desiring machine. True to the record's title, vocals are the centrepiece of most of the tracks, but they are fragmented, dispersed like an oilslick on the water's surface. On "Market", the album's most hypnotic track, it takes a good six minutes to build up to the vocal hook – until that point Johanna Niemela's voice is heard only via tentative inhalations hissed over and over, as if making explicit the link between the voice and the breath.

Interestingly, the closest comparison to Vocalcity's striated analogue growl can be found in Photek's "Back To Mine", the track from 2000's *Solaris* fronted by Robert Owens – another (re)turn to House that caught fans and detractors alike completely off guard.

When asked about Luomo, Delay is defensive. "I have to be careful with this one," he says cautiously. "Somehow I've managed to get this subject off on the wrong track one or two times." His caution is understandable, as this kind of stylistic turn always leaves musicians open to accusations of dilettantism and appropriation. But he makes no bones about coming at the music from outside the tradition: "Before Luomo, I hadn't been exposed to House music at all, meaning not having nor having heard any music from the genre, never been to clubs, and from that standpoint I never really cared about House music at all."

Delay's earliest musical work was grounded exclusively in jazz, which he played throughout his teens. Moving from drums to "more electronics based percussion", Delay spent his adolescence playing with various groups and collectives, before ultimately striking out on his own. "With those collectives I tried to compose and produce everything myself, which was good in a way – it gave me the green light that it was all doable." He disconnected from everyone around him and proceeded "to get some studio gear, without much of an idea what to do. Most of all, I wanted to continue improvising, just to make it all look different." The improvisational method led to the sprawling, unstructured feel of his first Ambient recordings like *Ele* (Sigma Editions) and *Multilia* (Chain Reaction). But he found that this kind of isolationism could only go so far. The Ambient approach became stifling. Frequent touring led to the collapse of a relationship at home, and he found himself wanting to reconnect with old collaborators. "All these factors came together, and it was a kind of 'fuck that' moment, where something different had to be done," he recalls. "I wanted to go into territory which was totally unknown to me, and mix into it many elements from my background – be it jazz, Ambient, or whatever. I also had the idea to incorporate more listening-oriented things into a clubbing format, and to bring the clubbing format to home listening mediums as well."

Oddly enough, Delay doesn't regard Vocalcity as a

success. He explains, "I was touring, and struggling in my studio, which was originally designed for low key Ambient recordings, let alone the fact that I was never exposed to this kind of music and recording vocals and all that." He hopes to correct his 'mistakes' with the second round of the project. "Where Luomo 1 was just something done in a panic and messy situations," he explains, "Luomo 2 is being done in a more controlled medium, which will address a wider vision of things to come."

In the meantime, Luomo's springloaded House rhythms have evaporated into the freefloating drift of Delay's recent *Mille Plateaux* release, *Anima*. But on closer inspection, Vocalcity's roots make furtive appearances in Delay's earliest work – the lurching, bottom-heavy Ambient tracks of *Ele* follow the same curling Moebius strip logic, folding in elements an echo at a time, burying the bareboned structure in an avalanche of clicks and static. Not to extend the Northern metaphor too far ("I don't buy the hype about the Finnish darkness and isolation," says Delay of the qualities usually ascribed to his own music, along with countrymen like Pan Sonic), but it's a glacial sound, a creeping obliteration of a more conventional sonic landscape.

That aesthetic is at the heart of 'Clicks + Cuts', the style promoted by Achim Szepanski on *Mille Plateaux*'s two compilations of the same name. But Clicks + Cuts isn't really a genre, or even a methodology. As intended by Szepanski, it's a conceptual trope to explain the 'cut-paste-copy-funk' of contemporary computer-based composition. Yet it's a slippery enough term that could just as well describe the crackling effects achieved by a loose constellation of artists working more or less with digital media (even if Pan Sonic, for instance, are generally better known for their use of vintage analogue gear). But the grainy, hissing palette favoured by so many producers today often shares the dubby underpinning of House and Techno, and the *Clicks + Cuts* compilations share a few crosshatched centimetres where their circle overlaps with the output of labels like Kompakt and Klang Elektronik.

The music produced by Berlin's Jan Jelinek – aka Gramm and Farben – resides deep in the recesses of this overlap. Not only does his scratchy sound fairly approximate the shaded-in convexity of a Venn Diagram, but he incorporates the moody, glitch-born murk of the Clicks + Cuts school with the punchier drive of MicroHouse. His work as Gramm, for David Moufang's Source label, is probably the furthest 'out' of any of his projects, largely because it's curated entirely by Moufang, who tends more toward lounge atmospherics than booty squirm. But his Farben records, released on Frankfurt's Klang Elektronik label, consist of an almost virtual take on House music. Borrowing the tried and tested blueprint from generations of dancefloor tracks, Farben tracks feature

RIGHT : VLADISLAV DELAY (LUOMO)
 CENTRE : RICARDO VILLALOBOS & DANDY JACK
 (RIC Y MARTIN)
 MONTREAL 2001
 FAR RIGHT : THOMAS BRINKMANN
 MONTREAL 2001



a straight 4/4 rhythm, heavy on the downbeat and with a steadily ticking pulse. But like a piece of fossilised wood, where minerals have replaced all the plant matter, even though the grain appears to remain the same, all the percussive elements – the thumping bass drum, ticking hi-hat, etc – have been replaced by ticks and pops and compressed bits of static and hiss. It is crystalline, transparent and utterly gorgeous.

I meet up with Jelinek during a brief stopover in San Francisco. As a deep thumping sound resonates from inside the warehouse HQ of Betalounge, where ~scape label colleagues Pole and Burnt Friedman are broadcasting live over the Internet, Jelinek tries to articulate the link between minimalism and House. In case there is any doubt about his affinities, his Blaze T-shirt gives the game away. "I think in the States they are regarded as a very cheesy act," he says almost apologetically, although it's true that the gospel stylings of the high flying House act's *Natural Blaze* album have been lost on many a Clicks + Cuts convert.

While his music is as severely reduced as the work of his colleagues, it is Jelinek who draws MicroHouse's most explicit connection to minimalism. "On my first Farben EPs, I tried to translate Josef Albers's *Homage To The Square*, which are very minimal paintings – when you look at them, it's a kind of deep concentration. The idea is that I want to create maximum depth with minimal forms. I think it's the only way to reach something like deep music – when you reduce it to the max, you have just four elements, four tracks, and that's all."

Jelinek's latest album, *Loop-Finding-Jazz-Records* (~scape), strays far from the 4/4 foundation underpinning his Farben productions. Using the loop-finding wheel on his sampler, he clipped numerous samples of millisecond durations from 60s jazz records and reconfigured them into a shifting Ambient mass that's meant to approximate the moiré effect of Op Art paintings, suggesting an illusory three dimensional space hidden inside a dense thicket of lines. While the finished tracks bear no resemblance to their origins, the sources weren't entirely arbitrary.

"I think the idea to minimise arrangements is based in soul music," says Jelinek. "When you hear [the Roy Ayers-produced funk group] Ramp, for example, it's a kind of minimal music. It's very tight, the premise of just playing one beat and no breaks, and when I listen to this kind of music I have the same feeling as when I listen to minimal House music – I think the essence is the same. I want to translate the essence of Marvin Gaye's records into something new, into electronic music. Deep House is a kind of pathetic music, because it works with strong feelings. For me, when I'm dancing to Deep House I have strong, ecstatic feelings – it's like hearing the deep pathos of a Marvin Gaye record. I want to translate this essence into a new genre, a new kind of music. For example, Losoul [aka Peter Kremier], a good friend of mine, works in the same way – when he's at home, he's just listening

to soul records. For me it's the same. I'm not hearing much electronic music when I'm at home." Jelinek falters for the words in English, which lacks the combinatory transformations of German, as he tries to explain what drives him. "To try to transform the essence of this music," he stumbles. "The essence is... when you hear Deep House, the feelings you have... this is the essence."

Of course, any insistence upon the notion of essence is bound to bring up the question of race. If House springs from a traditionally black, largely African-American musical tradition – as argued most forcefully, even vehemently, by Moodymann – what's at stake in this revisit of its origins by European artists? For Jelinek, the only option is to radically reinvent it. "As a German, it's very strange to try to play soul music," he concedes. "The only result is Jazzanova or something, and that's not really what I want to do. I don't want to do the same stuff as 20 years ago. I want to innovate, to transform it into a European culture, maybe, because I can't ever get the feeling of an Afro-American, so why try to imitate that?"

Across numerous releases, Cologne's Thomas Brinkmann has attempted to strip dub Techno down to its most skeletal form, even reconstructing the music from cuts in the run-out grooves of vinyl records, as heard on the recent *Klick* CD. His sound has moved radically away from that of his earlier, and anonymously released, *Soul Center* records, which paid homage to classic funk and soul recordings. The first *Soul Center* album's sleeve note spelled out a definitive trajectory: "Thanks to Wilma, G Clinton & Cie, T Monk..., T Emptations, F Tops, D Bell, A Shakir, C Young, T Parrish, RRR, J Paape/T Brinkmann." *Soul Center 2* opens with a shout and a soul man's invocation, "Can I ask you something?", before launching into a lurching House reconstruction of Stax and Motown-era R&B.

Via email, Brinkmann cryptically explains how he arrived at the *Soul Center* project. "I was missing something," he says flatly, recalling hearing The Bar Kays' grinding "Holy Ghost" at discos in the 70s, and lamenting the lack of musical diversity in today's dance clubs. Following on from the highly conceptualised releases issued using his Ester Brinkmann alter ego, the *Soul Center* project also allowed him to "to say nothing, with 'let's go down to the disco' as a structural fact". Unable to escape the Cartesian mind/body split, with the *Soul Center* records, and their strident shouts and ribshaking breaks, he is aiming at something entirely visceral, borne out by the crowd's reaction to the sampled soulman. "The people who are usually shouting and screaming [in the club] got this from the speaker," he says. "At this point there were two possibilities: the party [ends], or the people start to scream as well. Expression or impression, Stax or Motown, South and North." When I ask him about race, however, his dialectics collapse. "Ask Hitler about

races," he beefs. "He knows more than me. My grandfather was born in Africa, my mother in Haiti." Like his own dual-toned turntable, Brinkmann digs into his material to reveal contradictions that aren't easily resolved. In black musical traditions, he says, "People are speaking about speechless conversations. In Afro-American culture you'll find a history book without words. The tradition is music – and music is a bastard."

Uwe Schmidt, who as Atom Heart, Señor Coconut and a host of other aliases has explored numerous bastard traditions, added to the MicroHouse canon last year with his *Mille Plateaux* album *My Life With Jesus*, which he issued under the name Geeez 'N' Gosh. In this unlikely version of gospel set to House's steady pulse, a series of self-consciously digital chirps, buzzes and squelches underpins a blues call and response structure, all hung on that classic boom-tick beat. Working in a genre in which the confusion of form and content is central, Geeez 'N' Gosh takes it even further. "Geeez 'N' Gosh seems to be an album about religion," says Schmidt. "This seems obvious to many. Interestingly, to me this is not the case. Religion to me is a genre as much as is House, for example. I am not making music about certain subjects. I am not telling stories nor transmitting opinions, but rather asking questions. Geeez 'N' Gosh therefore is an associative game which combines and merges typical genre elements." And as a skewed take on not only gospel but also House music, Schmidt foregrounds the question of race with respect to the latter. "The question of race indeed is interesting, because you can fake it, as you can fake any representation of something – art. I'm not a House musician, neither am I black, but still Geeez 'N' Gosh to many people meant a lot of them thinking and believing that I was."

The awkward term 'House not House' has been coined to describe the array of broken, offbeat productions from UK labels like Laws Of Motion and 2000 Black, and it is a fair assessment of much MicroHouse, which hovers between generic familiarity and something entirely different. Rajko Müller, who records as Isolée for the Frankfurt based Playhouse label (part of a group of imprints that includes Klang Elektronik and Ongaku), would concur. "I was wondering about Jan Jelinek," he muses, when I ask how he might classify his colleague's music. "I read an interview with him where he said that he originally wanted to make House music, but he felt it was so difficult – it's such a huge category, where you have so many [established subgenres], that it was too difficult to get into it. So what he's doing now is like a result of not being able to do House music." So there's a kind of anxiety at work in his music? "I'm just happy that he's not doing House music," responds Müller, with a laugh.

Müller's Isolée records bear a similarly complicated relationship to the House genre – indeed, to any



genre. When you ask him to characterise his music, he abstains. "I don't like this question – I think as a musician you shouldn't categorise your own music, or try to describe it. I'd prefer it if you did that." After a moment of reflection, however, he elaborates: "I think my music refers to House music, but I don't really aim to fit into this category, because to me even the term House music has its roots in a very American culture. So what I do is referring to House music, but I want it to be more open as a concept."

In Müller's music you can detect echoes of New Wave, Kraftwerk and even Electro as well as House. While a track like "Bleu" (off 1999's *Beau Mot Plage* EP) chugs along solidly in the vein of dubby Cologne Techno, last year's "I Owe You" grafts a minimal Electro beat to shuddering arpeggios and woozily out-of-tune singing. More syncopated than House and lacking its forward drive, it swirls in its own juices, making it one of the creepier tunes to have come out of dance music in years. Likewise, the *Rest* album nods mainly to an analogue nostalgia. Ill at ease with itself, it's sadder and weirder than any of the tracks produced by Detroit's and Ann Arbor's bonafide electro revivalists such as Ectomorph and Adult.

The irony is that "Beau Mot Plage" became

MicroHouse's unexpected hit record. Alongside its 1999 appearance on Playhouse, the Deep House imprint Classic licensed the track for release in the UK. Luke Solomon (one half of Music For Freaks, and Derrick Carter's partner in Classic) had heard a CD-R of the track in Frankfurt, where he keeps a residency at the Playhouse-affiliated club Robert Johnson (yes, named after *that* Robert Johnson), and was struck by its lilting, 'Kraftwerk in the Caribbean' mood. Anu Pillai's "Freeform Five Remix" coaxed the track's Latin vibe out of hiding, reworking it as a jubilant fusion extravaganza, and suddenly it was everywhere; Solomon even heard it playing in the dressing room of a French Connection shop in Leeds. Playhouse's Heiko Schäfer estimates that the track has been licensed to around 20 compilations, but for Müller, it's a dubious measure of success. "I spoke to a friend of mine, who was looking at how many compilations include "Beau Mot Plage". He told me, 'Man, you're on such shitty compilations, it's incredible!'" For the record, those compilations range from Jesper Dahlback's excellent *Stockholm Mix Sessions* to Roger Sanchez's *Ministry Of Sound: Volume 11*, in which, bizarrely, a Trance remix of The Police sets up the intro to

RIGHT

: HEIKO SCHÄFER & ATA MACIAS
(PLAYHOUSE FOUNDERS)
FRANKFURT 2001

FAR RIGHT

: ATA MACIAS
FRANKFURT 2001



"Beau Mot Plage". "After a while you feel like it's gotten out of your control," says Müller of his song's runaway success. "I feel like a spectator who's watching what happens to my own track."

Intriguingly, Müller's *Isolée* tracks replace House's disco foundation with submerged funk rhythms. "I haven't been asked about funk much, it's a new question," he says. "I'm happy if you hear some funk in the music, but normally, maybe, funk is more related to Afro-American music. It's very important to me – I used to listen a lot to reggae, where you have also this kind of rhythm, this groove." Like his colleagues, Müller also cites the influence of jazz, which is curious given MicroHouse's total deviation from the lush orchestration characteristic of the current vogue for Latin House and 'nu-jazz'. "But then, I would say that in Kraftwerk there must also be a lot of funk," he suggests, "if you can find it in my own tracks."

Ricardo Villalobos, whose percussive epics are populated with sonic microbes engaged in delicate, mathematical mating dances, echoes Jan Jelinek in insisting upon the importance of structure, but he's even more explicit in emphasising the emotive potential of minimalism. This Chilean born musician discovered his modus operandi after studying percussion in Cuba and Brazil: "How to create a rhythm that can persist for ten or 12 minutes without being boring, that creates a special, isolated feeling with isolated frequencies?" he asks. Not a native English speaker, during our conversation Villalobos emphasises the effect of "isolated frequencies" on "isolated feelings" so often that I begin to wonder if these clumsy descriptions are actually infinitely nuanced terms in his mother tongue. "Every time I have a deep connection to a song it's because it can create an isolated feeling in me," he says. "You need space, so the minimal music and isolated frequencies are necessary to create feelings — the melodies and rhythms and monotone things. The records have to be empty, because if they are not empty you don't have enough space to project inside."

"What is House?" he continues, posing the question at the heart of the matter. "The industries try to create terms like Techno, House, Tech-House, to sell more records. But it's all House music for me. The whole 4/4 rhythm with the hi-hats, it's all House. The feeling of being in a club and feeling the bass and the bass drum and the feelings created in this moment, this is House music. Together with a lot of people and everybody screaming, everybody dancing, sometimes very nice, sometimes very crazy — everything [related to this] is House. You can have [a related genre] like Techno, but it's an aggressive form of the same thing. So for me everything is House."

Heiko Schäfer, of the Playhouse, Klang and Ongaku group of labels, echoes both Jelinek and Villalobos in his preference for minimalism. "I like the idea of

having just two machines and making them run together, just going until you've exhausted the opportunities you have with these machines. Trying to get the most out of two or three sounds, that's what I like about early Chicago House music especially, like Steve Poindexter or Marshall Jefferson, who could make a really good track with just a drum machine and a bassline."

Like Brinkmann's attempt to return to the less discriminatory atmosphere of the 70s disco, Schäfer's ideas about musical progression are driven in part by nostalgia. "I must admit that I'm really into the House music that was done in the late 80s and the early 90s, because I can feel a certain warmth and emotion. Everything today is so specified and specialised, I think that most people forget the basics of what makes music music. And that's why we like House music, because most of the time it was done in the bedroom, and it just came straight from the heart, or the feet, or the belly."

And so Playhouse finds itself moving laterally: it was founded as an offshoot of the Acidic Ongaku label with the release of 1993's "Holy Garage", a record which signalled the label's immersion in the New Jersey deep. "Without ever saying it or talking about it, we've moved away from specialising in House music, or talking about where are we going to take House music," says Schäfer. "I would keep it more general: we're more interested in taking music somewhere."

Despite the prevalence of German producers enmeshed in this sound, it's not a national phenomenon. Indeed, the number of expatriates involved in the scene begs the question of whether there's some fundamental nomadic urge lurking behind MicroHouse's uprooted grooves. Villalobos's family fled from Chile to Germany to escape Pinochet's regime. Uwe Schmidt's collaborator Dandy Jack is yet another member of a sizeable Chilean expat community in Germany, while Schmidt made the trek in reverse, moving from Germany to Santiago.

Nonetheless, it's tempting to suggest that none of this would exist without Cologne's musical cottage industry, which sprang from early Acid labels such as Trans Atlantic and Structure, and the extensive activities of Wolfgang Voigt (better known as Mike Ink, although he has now forsaken that working alias in favour of his given name). After all, House, like Jungle, Techno, indeed most electronic music, is defined as much by record labels as individual artists. The 'faceless Techno producer' may be a construction of the mainstream music media, an anxious response to the prospect of a guitarless, starless pop spectrum, but the fact remains that musical metagenres — that is, musics which explicitly refer to their own form, revising and refining the structure with each release — produce labels with a stronger 'brand value' than the artists they release. Much of this must have to do with dance music's propensity for aliases and

collaborations; Perlon is a more recognisable name than any of the artists it releases, but then again the label hasn't exactly made it easy to keep track of its shapeshifting artists, who record under any number of names, and team up with each other under still more aliases, like Ric Y Martin and Pantytec and Narcotic Syntax, all so anonymous in their incestuousness. Indeed, the *Clicks + Cuts* compilations are a testament to the declining role of the individual artist in the propagation of genre, given the way that dozens of participants, each generally well known for his or her own sound, have been brought together to create, artificially some would say, a more or less uniform body of work under the idea of a genre. *Clicks + Cuts* may represent the first 'virtual genre' in history.

But if MicroHouse is the product largely of record labels, it is rooted most deeply in the successive vehicles that Wolfgang Voigt helmed throughout the 90s: Studio 1, Profan and now Kompakt, the Cologne shop/mail order business whose label is home to a tight circle of artists, including Michael Mayer, Jürgen Paape, Dettinger, Joachim Spieth, Voigt's brother Reinhard and others. Kompakt's stylistic range is more diverse than any of the labels — Klang, Playhouse, Perlon, Deep House imprint Stir15 — which have sprung up in its wake, and its roster currently ranges from Jonas Bering's gritty Ambient tracks to Closer Musik's unabashed pop sentimentalism. But it is most noted for pioneering a minimalist formula that does indeed create "isolated feelings" from "isolated frequencies".

Emerging from Voigt's early Acid releases as Mike Ink and the umbrella of the Brotherhood Of Structure, Kompakt has travelled furthest in the unorthodox use of sampling as a mechanism to graft new skin onto House music's skeleton. On Voigt's 1998 *Maßstab* record, released under the name M:I:5 on Profan, dub and Techno were rendered in negative, with Voigt filling in the spaces around the expected beats with clattering and unruly samples of drums, keyboards and voices. Other Kompakt artists have taken up the same strategy. Dettinger uses samples of bells, gongs and other, less traceable elements to build up mountains of sediment over a House structure that's only detectable in its contours, the way dead cities become cloaked beneath earthen mounds. Joachim Spieth, on the other hand, uses similar samples — clangy bells, swollen slap-bass, crickety hi-hats — to replicate shudderingly funky House tracks.

Michael Mayer, who works alongside Voigt at the Kompakt shop, and has a hand in running the label, is quick to espouse the virtues of sampling technology. "The sampler is the main instrument for all of us," he enthuses, "because it's the most creative way to produce music — or it was maybe until last year, or two years ago, when some of these new programs for Macs and PCs came up. It was the chance to produce your very personal sound, to create a sound which nobody can copy. It's not based on preset sounds from



synthesizers. You had many more possibilities to develop your own signature. It's much more exciting to investigate and find out how you sound, how your personal sound is not dependent upon machines like Roland synthesizers and drum machines, because everybody has these machines, and so many records sound the same. It's very important to find your own sound."

Kompakt was founded in 1998 as a consolidation of the many interrelated projects coming out of the city's Techno scene. Mayer explains: "There were like 20 labels in our family, and it became too difficult for people to follow what we do. So we decided to take one name, like a trademark, and try to concentrate all our projects under this name, and give the whole thing something like a roof. And that was Kompakt."

When it comes to the music, Mayer is also an advocate of the principles of reduction: "There's so much stuff around, when you listen to other records, I often have the impression that there are too many sounds in the track. You can't hear the main thing in

the track because there are too many things layered above and around it. If you strip the track down to the bone, you'll see the most important things, the things that make you want to dance – it's always the rhythm and the bass. Sure, you can handle the music like a Christmas tree and put lots of coloured things on it, but that's not our interest."

"House music? Yeah, sure — it's the mothership," he continues, laughing. "I'm very grateful to the history of House music, and I'm glad to have the chance to take part in that, maybe pushing forth and inspiring forth." He mentions a recent report that Daniel Bell, aka 'King of Bleep' DBX, has been including Kompakt records in his DJ sets. "I'm glad to give something back to all the originators," he concludes. "It's an example that the circle is closed now. We were inspired by him and maybe now we inspire him in turn. It's a nice thing." □ *Websites for further information: Circonium www.circonium.de, Force Inc www.force-inc.com, Kompakt www.kompakt-net.de, Mad-Net www.mad-net.de, Max.Ernst www.max-ernst.de*

Around the (Micro)House: a tour of the premises

LUOMO VOCALCITY	:	FORCE TRACKS	MANNEQUIN LUNG	:	PLUG RESEARCH
AKUFEN PSYCHOMETRY VOL 1	:	TRAPEZ	THE ART OF TRAVEL	:	FAT CAT
BEIGE THE RHYTHM! THE MESSAGE?	:	LEAF	MATMOS FREAK'N'YOU 12"	:	
EHLERT & LOHBERGER VITO EP	:	KOMPAKT	NEW WORLD AQUARIUM	:	DELSIN
FARBEN FEATURING THE DRAMATICS			TRESPASSERS	:	PERLON
LIVE AT THE SIERRA TAHOE, 1973	:	KLANG ELEKTRONIK	PANTYTEC PANTYTEC	:	SOUND SIGNATURE
MAURICE FULTON PRESENTS STRESS WET & STICKY	:	TRANSFUSION	THEO PARRISH I CAN'T TAKE IT	:	RECLOSE
FREAKS TURNING ORANGE	:	PLAYHOUSE	CAN'T TAKE THE ABSENCE	:	PLANET E
GEEEZ 'N' GOSH MY LIFE WITH JESUS	:	MILLE PLATEAUX	SOUL CENTER SOUL CENTER 2	:	WVB
MATT HERBERT			JOACHIM SPIETH ABI'99	:	KOMPAKT
LET'S ALL MAKE MISTAKES	:	TRESOR	VARIOUS SUPERLONGEVITY 2	:	PERLON
LOSOUl BELONG	:	PLAYHOUSE	STEWART WALKER VS THEOREM	:	THEOREM
			TOO DISTANT IMAGES	:	

RADIOHEAD MAY BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST GROUPS ON THE PLANET, BUT THEIR DISSENTING VOICE AND EXPLORATORY STUDIO TECHNIQUES CONFLICT WITH THE COMMERCIAL PRESSURE TO MAINTAIN THEIR STATUS. SIMON REYNOLDS SPEAKS TO THOM YORKE AND JONNY GREENWOOD ABOUT TREADING THE FINE LINE BETWEEN SELLING OUT STADIUMS AND THEIR ROLE AS MAINSTREAM AMBASSADORS FOR MUSICAL INNOVATION.

PHOTOS: JASON EVANS

Platinum and gold. The walls of Courtyard Management's office are lined with discs commemorating prodigious feats of unit-shifting in far-flung territories of the globe. Located in the somnolent Oxfordshire village of Sutton Courtenay, Courtyard is the nerve centre for one of the world's most successful groups. But all previous triumphs (*Kid A* winning the Grammy for Best Alternative Album, the anointing of *OK Computer* as 'Best Album of All Time' by the readers of *Q*) surely pale next to the ultimate accolade – making it onto the cover of *The Wire*.

Seriously, though. Maybe your first thought on picking up this issue was 'whatthefuck?!', and maybe that's an understandable reaction. After all, Radiohead are a group who have chalked up multi-platinum sales in 50 countries. I haven't done the maths (I'm not that crazy), but it does strike me as perfectly conceivable that the total career sales of every other artist featured in this current issue, totted up, still might not match the global sales of *OK Computer*, Radiohead's biggest selling album to date. And there is a potent argument that a group with this kind of commercial heft and such a degree of mainstream consensus of praise behind them simply has no place on the front cover of a magazine known for championing mavericks and margin dwellers.

But Radiohead have earned it. Consider the facts: late last year, three albums rejuvenated the moribund concept of 'post-rock', Sigur Rós's *Agaetis Byrjun*, Godspeed You Black Emperor's *Lift Yr Skinny Fists Like Antennas To Heaven*, and Radiohead's *Kid A*. All three tampered with post-rock's increasingly proforma formula in significant ways. Godspeed! brought political angst to this generally abstract and dispassionate genre; Sigur Rós added human songfulness to what's usually instrumental mood music; *Kid A* did a bit of both. But only one of this 'post-rock reborn!' triumvirate entered the UK and US album charts at Number One. Now its sister release, *Amnesiac* – drawn from the same sessions as *Kid A*; indeed at one point the two records were set to be a double album – has repeated this extraordinary feat.

What's fascinating, and unprecedented, is just how Radiohead pulled off this swerve from the path seemingly mapped out for them. Just when *OK Computer* had left them only a step away from becoming the biggest rock outfit on the planet, with *Kid A*, first, and now *Amnesiac* they chose to operate as mainstream ambassadors for many of the musical innovators this magazine cherishes. There's glitchtronic contraptions like "Pull/Pulk Revolving Doors"; "How To Disappear Completely" is like a Scott Walker ballad scored by Penderecki; "Treefingers" recalls the vapourscapes of *Spirit Of Eden/On Land*; the interstellar overdrive of "The National Anthem" is Faust meets Mingus; "Idioteque" samples Paul Lansky's computer compositions; and the thick orchestral haze on "Dollars & Cents" is reminiscent of Alice Coltrane's arrangements on her early 70s albums such as *Universal Consciousness*.

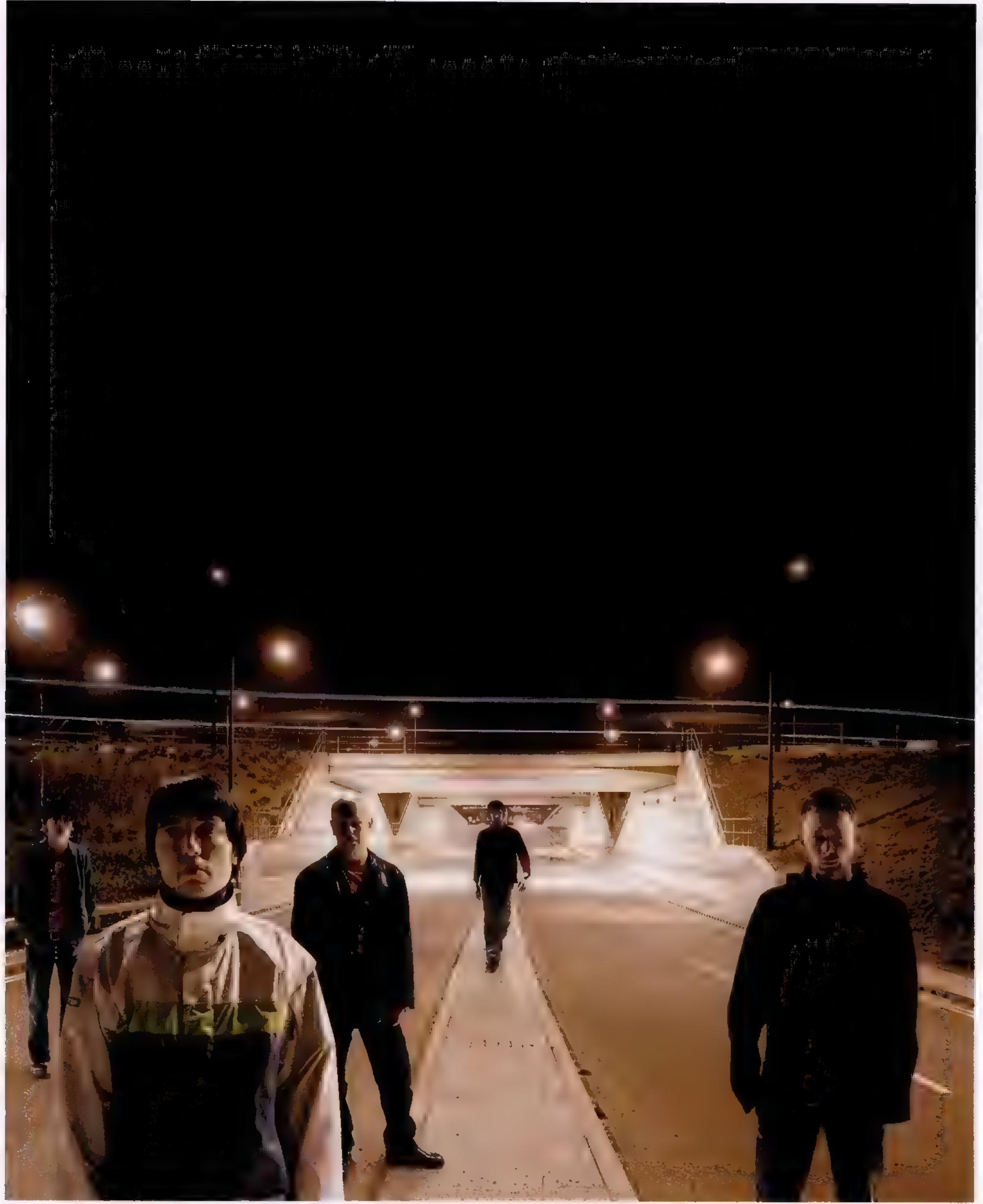
"Maybe we just took some sort of left turn," says Thom Yorke – Radiohead's singer and by all accounts its aesthetic tillerman – shrugging off the mystery of the group's redirection towards the margins as simply not that remarkable. Relaxed and healthy looking, he barely resembles the gaunt, ghostfaced figure that appears in the *OK Computer* world tour documentary *Meeting People Is Easy*, harrowed by the endless grind of interviews, meet 'n' greets, photoshoots, soundchecks, ligs... Nor is he the prickly blood-from-a-stone interviewee of legend. There are moments, though, where it occurs to me that his 'genial, laidback, unassuming' character might just be another shield: a more sly strategy of self-protection than the 'fools not gladly suffered' persona of old.

'Downplay everything' seems to be the new Radiohead media relations policy – the canny pre-emptive disarming of any accusations of autohypno or delusions of avant grandeur. So Yorke suggests that *Kid A* was "not as much of a radical gesture as some said". And guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Jonny Greenwood, speaking by phone from Spain a few days later, claims Radiohead just picked up where they had

left off on *OK Computer*. "With us, it's never going to be a case of 'let's tear up the blueprint and start from scratch,'" he says. "When the *Kid A* reviews came out accusing of us being wilfully difficult, I was like, 'If that was true, we'd have done a much better job of it'. It's not that challenging – everything's still four minutes long, it's melodic."

Such self-effacing professions of modest ambition are rather at odds with the impression given by Radiohead in the press blitz that surrounded the release of *Kid A* last autumn, which painted a picture of a group almost tearing itself to pieces in the struggle to achieve total aesthetic renewal. Yorke spoke of how he had even contemplated changing their name in order to make a break with Radiohead's past recordings, towards which he felt utter alienation. Instead of self-destruction, Radiohead eventually settled on self-deconstruction; discarding or tampering with the two elements most celebrated by fans and critics alike: their guitar sound, and Yorke's singing and lyrics. *Kid A* is largely devoid of guitars, with Jonny Greenwood preferring to play the Ondes Martenot (an early electronic instrument that dates back to 1928), write arrangements for string orchestra, or even play the recorder. And *Amnesiac*'s slight return to rock is not going to get the fans transcribing fret fingerings and posting 'guitar tabs' up on their Webzines, as they did following the release of *OK Computer*. As for Yorke's singing, on *Kid A/Amnesiac*, studio technology and unusual vocal technique are both applied to dyslexify his already oblique, fragmented words. Yorke has said he will never allow the lyrics to be printed and that listeners are expressly not meant to focus on them.

Radiohead's 'not such a radical shift really' line is also belied by Yorke's evident glee at the way *Kid A* upset his 'peers' in the Britrock aristocracy. The album was clearly taken as some kind of stinging reproach by a number of underachieving and deeply compromised Britpopsters, including accusations of "cowardice" from Oasis. "We've obviously riled them in some way,"



"I THINK GUITARS ARE OVER-IDOLISED AS INSTRUMENTS. IT'S ABOUT NOT PRACTISING. I LIKE WHAT TOM WAITS SAID ABOUT ONLY EVER PICKING UP AN INSTRUMENT IF HE'S GOING TO WRITE A SONG"

- JONNY GREENWOOD



agrees Yorke. Perhaps the Gallagher brothers' broadside is related to Britpop's core ideology of 'make it big at any cost', a rhetoric of shooting for the charts which denigrated older indie rock idealism as defeatist, obscurantist, even elitist. Not only did *Kid A* resurrect a different concept of ambition – artistic growth as opposed to sales bloat – but it interfered with Radiohead fulfilling their 'proper' destiny of becoming a front rank, U2-sized megagroup.

A brief history of Radiohead: how they got here from there. Formed in Oxford by five schoolfriends – Thom Yorke, brothers Jonny and Colin Greenwood, Phil Selway and Ed O'Brien – the group first grabbed attention in 1992 with "Creep", a single that got nowhere on its first release in the UK, but became a massive hit in post-Nirvana America when modern rock radio programmers picked up on it. In many ways, the 'grunge ballad' sound of "Creep" and its lyrical stance (maladjustment and ressentiment akin to the outcast protagonist of "Smells Like Teen Spirit") made Radiohead an English equivalent to Nirvana. The two groups had similar influences and idols (The Pixies, REM, Sonic Youth), were fuelled by similar distaste for the phoney, and faced similar accusations of wallowing in misery. But the crucial word there is 'English'. You can imagine Kurt Cobain, if he'd chosen to live, probably going the unplugged troubadour route, stripping down his sound to let his plaintive songs stand naked and alone, folky and forlorn. You could never imagine him doing a *Kid A*, plunging deeper into studio science. Therein lies the vast, enduring gulf between American and British ideas of rock.

By 1995's *The Bends*, the English art rock element was starting to come to the fore. Pop musicians and movie stars began turning up to their shows; stoners and lapsed ravers turned onto the sheer drug-conducive luxuriance of their sound. But it was 1997's *OK Computer* that really transformed Radiohead into the rock group it was OK for electronica headz to dig. It was also the album where Yorke and co started to complicate the anthemic qualities of their earlier music

in earnest, by deep immersion in such avant staples as Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*.

A sort of semi-concept album about technology and alienation, *OK Computer*'s sheer magnitude – of sound, thematics, aspiration – served time on Britpop, replacing its laddish anti-intellectualism and vacant hedonism with the glamour of literacy and angst. Noel and Liam are right to feel goaded: Radiohead are the Anti-Oasis, and *OK Computer*'s massive popular success, eclipsing the Gallagher brothers' cocaine-blighted/bloated *Be Here Now*, announced the closure of an entire era of Britrock. Yet touring and promoting the album for much of 1998 convinced Yorke that it was still too mired in rock tradition, too epic. "It was still pressing all the correct buttons," he says. When Q's readership infamously voted *OK Computer* the Best Album of All Time (an error of passion perhaps, but certainly preferable to the usual pantheon of Pet Sounds/Revolver/Astral Weeks/London Calling), Radiohead had become rock icons in the most old fashioned sense – the singer as seer, oracle, figurehead, spokesperson.

"I tell you what's really ridiculous – going into a bookshop and there's all these books about yourself," Yorke says of the multiple cut and paste Radiohead biographies that came out in *OK Computer*'s wake. "In a way, it feels like you're already dead. So you've got a kind of license to start again."

Worn out by the experiences documented on *Meeting People Is Easy*, such as touring America's infamous 'shed circuit' of 10,000 capacity, corporate sponsored venues, Yorke spiralled into a black period of confusion and creative block. His condition was exacerbated by the self-consciousness feedback syndrome induced by being over-interviewed and reading pseudo-psychoanalytical interpretations of his work. "People presume everything you write is completely personal... it feels weird, like someone walking over your grave," he says. He hated the lyrics he was writing. Even the sound of his voice made him nauseous. "Melodies became an embarrassment to me," he said last year.

"It did my head in that whatever I did with my voice, it had that particular set of associations," he says. "And there were lots of similar bands coming out at the time, and that made it even worse. I couldn't stand the sound of me even more." Embarking on the fraught, spasmodic sessions for *Kid A/Amnesiac*, he "got really into the idea of my voice being another one of the instruments, rather than this precious, focus thing all the time".

This instrumentalisation of the lead singer was just one facet of a total deconstruction of Radiohead as rock group, instigated by Yorke. As guitarist Ed O'Brien put it, the members had to learn "how to be a participant in a song without playing a note". In a sense, every member took on the role of Brian Eno in Roxy Music: a non-musician producer/catalyst, abandoning their designated instrumental function and grappling with unfamiliar sound generation devices as if they were toys. "It's not about being a guitarist in a rock band, it's about having an instrument in front of you and you're really excited by it," says Yorke. "It's like with Jonny playing Ondes Martenot on... just about everything! We couldn't stop him! We had to beg him to play guitar on "Morning Bell".

Greenwood says the Ondes Martenot obsession dates back to hearing it used in Olivier Messaien's *Turangalila Symphony* when he was 15. "I spent years reading all these descriptions of them, I couldn't even find a photograph, and then two years ago I finally got hold of one, and they're fantastic. The best way to describe it is a very accurate theremin that you have far more control of. The most famous use of the Martenot is the *Star Trek* theme, and it sounds like a woman singing. When it's played well, you can really emulate the voice. I get annoyed with electronic instruments because I reckon the Martenot is a bit of a peak."

With producer and 'sixth member' Nigel Godrich gradually coming round to the new approach, Radiohead embarked upon all kinds of Eno-esque oblique strategies: working on dozens of songs at once; moving on to something different as soon as it



got boring or blocked; splitting into two groups engaged in different activities. "It's like you're dabbling, but at the same time, when something really comes off, it's all down on tape," says Yorke. "Nigel's really into the idea of capturing a performance, even if we're doing pure electronic stuff. So it's never like we just program stuff and let it run. There always had to be something else going on, processing in real time."

Another model was Holger Czukay's jam/slice/splice productions for Can. "Dollars & Cents", one of *Amnesiac*'s highlights, was edited down from an 11 minute improvisation. "It was incredibly boring," laughs Yorke, "but it's that Holger thing of chop-chop-chop, making what seems like drivel into something coherent." Then orchestral strings – arranged by Greenwood and recorded in Dorchester Abbey – "were added to give it a sort of authority".

No strangers to the studio craft of overdubbing and effects, on *Kid A/Amnesiac* Radiohead finally and utterly abandoned the performance model of rock recording and went fully into concocting sonic fictions using the mixing desk as instrument. Answering a fan's query on Radiohead's Web forum, Greenwood talked about being obsessed with "the whole artifice of recording. I see it like this: a voice into a microphone onto a tape, onto your CD, through your speakers is all as illusory and fake as any synthesizer – it doesn't put Thom in your front room. But one is perceived as 'real', the other somehow 'unreal'... It's the same with guitars versus samplers. It was just freeing to discard the notion of acoustic sounds being truer." Speaking on the phone, Greenwood says the idea was influenced by reading Michael Chanan's 1995 meditation on recording, *Repeated Takes*. "The more concerts we do, the more dissatisfied we get with trying to reproduce the live sound on a record. In a way it can't be done, and that's a relief really, when you accept that, and recording just becomes a different thing."

The most striking departures from the real time three-guitar group sound are pieces such as *Kid A*'s title track, which, with its exquisitely wistful music-box chime and melted-candle Yorke vocal, is worthy of Curd Duca

or Boards Of Canada; and *Amnesiac*'s "Like Spinning Plates", whose dissociated drift reminds me of Robert Wyatt's *Rock Bottom* updated for the IDM era. "Plates" is partly built from an earlier song called "I Will" played backwards. Says Yorke, "We'd turned the tape around, and I was in another room, heard the vocal melody coming backwards, and thought, 'That's miles better than the right way round', then spent the rest of the night trying to learn the melody."

Although some have accused Radiohead of jumping on the electronica bandwagon, Yorke says his interest in Aphex-type music actually predates the group's 1993 debut *Pablo Honey*. "When the Warp thing was first happening, I was really into things like Sweet Exorcist's "Per Clonk". It sounded really amazing coming out an enormous PA system. All that Warp stuff made the bassbins blow with their turbo sounds." Studying art and English at Exeter University in the early 90s, he even participated in a Techno-influenced rock group called Flickernoise as a sideline from Radiohead, but found working with sequencers too frustrating. After the *OK Computer* tour, though, utterly burned on music containing guitars and singing, Yorke bought the entire Warp back catalogue and started ordering obscure IDM records via the Internet. For a long while during the *Kid A* sessions, he was totally uninterested in melody, just into exploring texture and rhythm. The result was tracks like *Kid A*'s "Idioteque", which sounds like two-step Garage with a PiL/"Death Disco" twist, but is actually "an attempt to capture that exploding beat sound where you're at the club and the PA's so loud, you know it's doing damage". On *Amnesiac*, the dirty 808 bass of "Pull/Pulk Revolving Doors" invites you to reimagine Yorke's mid-80s adolescence – not pining indoors to REM's *Murmur* and The Smiths' *Hatful Of Hollow*, but spraying graffiti and breakdancing in deserted shopping centres alongside LFO.

All this mixing up sounds very post-rock – unsurprisingly, a banner behind which Greenwood, ever so courteously, declines to rally. More tellingly, it's

also very post-punk: the Lydon-like rhetoric of leaving rock for dead ("I never wanted to be in a fucking rock group," Yorke told *Spin*), the post-Eno/dub embrace of the studio, the forays into electronics, black dance rhythm, jazz. Radiohead are possibly the very last of a generation of groups formatively influenced by the 1979-81 moment. All in their early thirties, they're too young to have experienced Joy Division or Magazine as they actually happened, and thus encountered them through the time-honoured 'older brother syndrome'. Well, an older sister, in the case of Jonny and bassist Colin Greenwood.

Greenwood's guitar sound – more audible on *Amnesiac* – is firmly in the post-blues, non-riff lineage that starts with Tom Verlaine: that plangent dazzling chime. "Our guitars are more clitoris substitutes than phallus ones – we stroke them in a nicer, gentler way," Greenwood once said. When I bring this up, he says he nicked the line from Slowdive, another Thames Valley group. "I think guitars are over-idolised as instruments. All the guitarists I've ever liked have had the Bernard Sumner approach. It's about not practising. I like what Tom Waits said about only ever picking up an instrument if he's going to write a song."

Radiohead's name comes from an obscure song by Talking Heads, whose Eno-produced 1979 LP *Remain In Light* was a life-changing event for Yorke, both musically and lyrically. "I'd listened to it endlessly but never looked at the words," he recalls, "and when I finally did, it really freaked me out. When they made that record, they had no real songs, just wrote it all as they went along. [David] Byrne turned up with pages and pages, and just picked stuff up and threw bits in all the time. And that's exactly how I approached *Kid A*... Jerry Harrison, their keyboard player, turned up to one of our gigs, just walked into the dressing room. Poor chap, after we realised who he was, he got grilled for hours on *Remain In Light*: 'Are they any loops or did you just play it all?' And they played it all, even though it sounds like tape loops."

"Do you know the story about 'Overload'? They'd read about Joy Division for the first time in *NME*,



thought 'That sounds interesting', and decided to do a tune based on what they thought Joy Division would be like, never having heard them." Two other things about Radiohead also strike me as very post-punk. First is their quiet but steadfast insistence on "total control", which recalls PiL's (largely rhetorical) notion of themselves as a "communications company" using a major label's marketing muscle but essentially remaining autonomous. In Radiohead's case, "total control" encompasses not just the licence to indulge themselves that underpins *OK Computer*, *Kid A* and *Amnesiac*, but a host of other aspects: the way they have kept their operational base outside London; the obsessive attention to detail that goes into their artwork (*Amnesiac* comes encased as a hardback library book, complete with much stamped slip; inside, there are lavish colour plate illustrations by Yorke's alter ego Tchocky and university pal Stanley Donwood); the group's Website (also designed by Donwood), via which Radiohead maintain direct contact with its fans. Shrugging off the PiL analogy ("We could never do a record on a par with *Metal Box*, let alone *Flowers Of Romance*," says Yorke, "and I'm no Lydon. I can't keep up the attitude!"), Yorke likes to stress that their independence within the corporate mainstream is precarious, dependent on the massive success of *OK Computer*. Greenwood admits, "We are a little fascistic in how and where our music is heard, but then we can be. If we were struggling, I'm sure we'd sell our music to anybody just to carry on."

The other spirit of 79 quality is Radiohead's relentless bleakness, an alienation that is never entirely private, sourced merely in individual neurosis. Reversing the old post-punk dictum, one might describe it as 'the political is personal'. Yorke has described *Kid A/Amnesiac* as being about "bearing witness". The things witnessed range from the connivings of politicians (*Amnesiac*'s "You And Whose Army?" is about UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, based on direct encounters that came about through Yorke's involvement in the Jubilee 2000 campaign to write off Third World Debt), to a wider sense of the world

becoming ever more overcontrolled, and at the same time out of control.

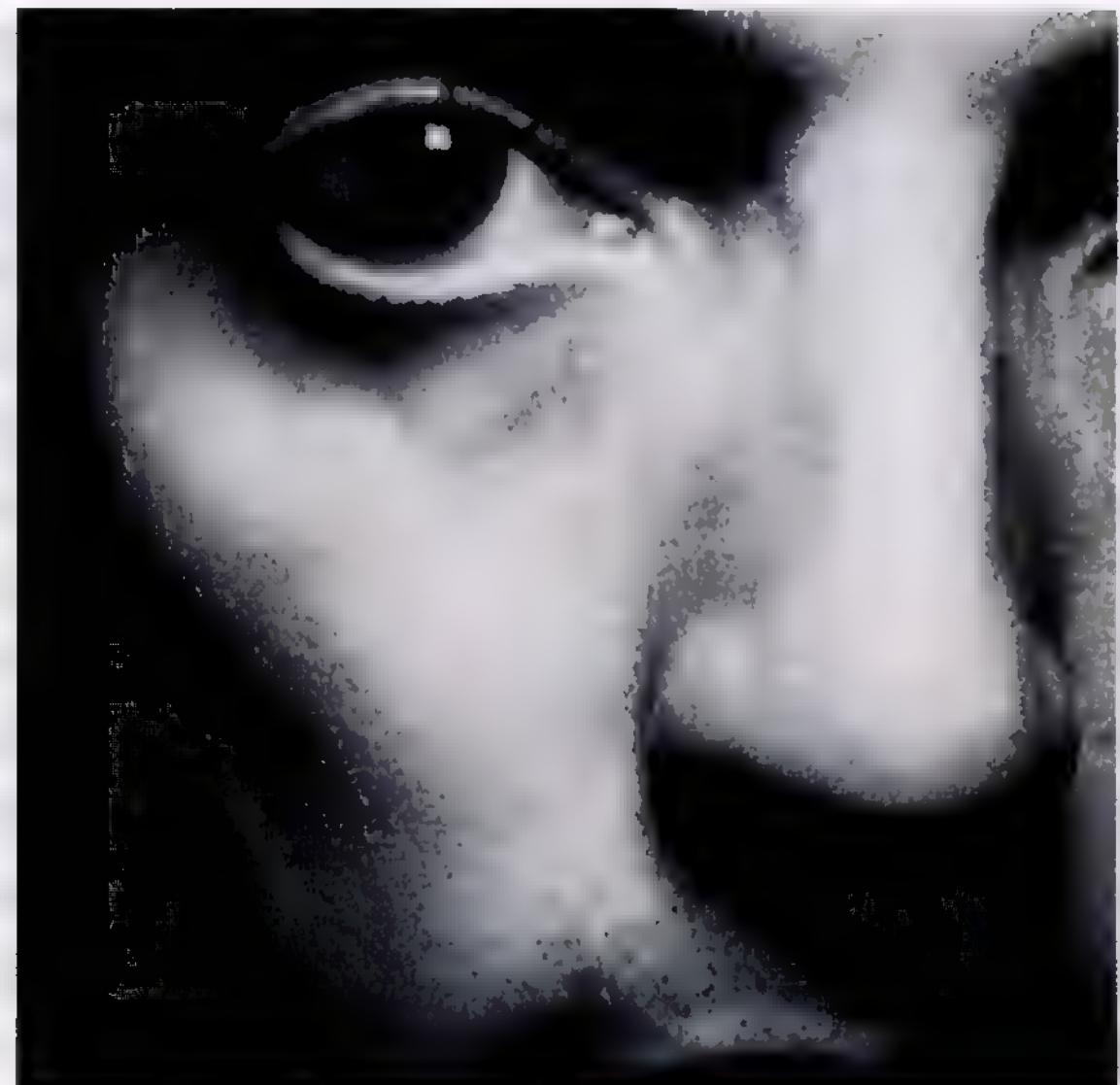
You can pick up this feeling from the lyrics: oblique images of running out of future, Darwinian dog eat dog struggle, cannibalism, an emotional "Ice Age coming" (an unwitting echo of Margaret Drabble's novel *The Ice Age*, a counterpart to punk in British literature which captured a mid-70s moment of malaise and crisis in the UK). More than the words, though, it's audible as a certain tenor, even timbre, of voice. "You And Whose Army?" offers words of defiance in a voice that sounds like all the fight has been kicked out of it (which is why it works in 2001, where an update of "Stand Down Margaret" would seem facile). Yorke is literally voicing (rather than articulating) contemporary feelings of dislocation, dispossession, numbness, impotence, paralysis; widely felt impulses to withdraw and disengage that are perfectly logical, dispirited responses to the bankruptcy of Centrist politics, which ensure that everyone remains equally disenchanted and aggrieved.

"It's all so part of the fabric of everything, even the artwork," Yorke says, referring to the recurring, Art Brut-ish schizo-scrawled motifs of Grim Reapers and Weeping Bears. "I couldn't really say it directly so much, but it's there – the feeling of being a spectator and not being able to take part. I was really conscious of not wanting to use a sledgehammer to bang people over the head with it. It's pretty difficult to put into songs. In a way you have to wait until it's a personal issue or experience." In June 1999, the attempt to deliver Jubilee 2000's 'Drop The Debt' petition to the G8 summit in Cologne was when it became personal. The petition's presenters, a group which included Yorke and U2's Bono, were outwitted by the G8 politicians, who denied them their desired photo opportunity in front of the conference's building. "We were made to walk down the back streets, and it was fucking surreal – we had these German military police escorting us down a tiny pedestrian shopping street, we're carrying this fucking banner, surrounded by bemused shoppers."

Playing off Greenwood's love of Polish composer Penderecki, you could describe *Kid A/Amnesiac* as a *Threnody For The Victims Of Globalisation*. Yorke says that spending three years in the UK after a lot of time touring abroad was a big influence: reading newspapers, noticing the discrepancy between mainstream pop culture and what was going on 'out there'. Three members of the group read Naomi Klein's anti-corporate bestseller *No Logo*, and at one point it was rumoured that *No Logo* would be the album title. Talking about the upsurge of anti-globalisation dissent, Yorke defends the movement from charges of ideological incoherence and being merely reactive. "That's how it's always dismissed in the mainstream media, but that's because it's this coalition of disparate interest groups who are all pissed off because they've been disenfranchised by politicians who are only listening to corporate lobby groups or unelected bodies like Davos [the World Economic Forum]. It's not based on the old left/right politics, it's not really even an anti-capitalist thing... It's something far deeper than that: 'Who do you serve?' It's a new form of dissent, a new politics, and the point is that the most important political issues of the day have been taken out of the political arena. They're being discussed by lobby groups paid for, or composed of, ex-members of corporations. And they spend a lot of effort trying to exclude the public, because it's inconvenient."

Yorke cuts himself short with a self-deprecating "I could go on like this forever, but I don't know what the fuck I'm talking about really!" He's fully aware of the UK tradition of scepticism and low tolerance for popstars who speak out, and conscious of the contradictions of Radiohead as dissidents bankrolled by Parlophone/EMI/Time/Warner/AOL: "We're screaming hypocrites. No, we are!" He also acknowledges that platinum-in-50-territories Radiohead are arguably the hip face of globalisation. Recalling Coca-Cola sponsored MTV events they played in Mexico and Thailand back when "Creep" was a heavy-rotation video, he says, "It was a weird feeling,





because you are right at the sharp end of the sexy, sassy, MTV eye-candy lifestyle thing that they're trying to sell to the rest of the world, make them aspire to. It's fair enough to question it. Unfortunately, if you're interested in actually being heard, you have to work within the system." He slips into a comedy Nazi accent: "Zey haff Kontroll!"

If Radiohead are a love or hate proposition – and they do induce violently polarised responses – a lot of it is down to Thom Yorke's voice, the dolorousness that is its natural tone and texture. "Miserabilist", "whinging", "tortured" are the kind of adjectives hurled by the hostile. Fans, in contrast, tend to talk of "beautiful sadness". This split response is reminiscent of how Morrissey divided listeners in 1983 into those who found his voice nectar to the ear or grating as nails on a blackboard. The parallel is apposite. That 1983 feeling is a lot like 2001, with mainstream pop sounding relentlessly glossy and upful. The conditions that made The Smiths (or REM, in Reagan's America) necessary as a counterweight to the likes of Wham! have returned.

The anguished timbre may be an acquired taste, but Yorke is an amazing singer. What's especially impressive about *Kid A/Amnesiac* is the way he operates as an ensemble player, another colour in the group's palette. Bored with all the standard tricks of vocal emoting, Yorke decided to interface voice and technology and develop what he's called "a grammar of noises". The first two tracks on *Kid A*, "Everything In Its Right Place" and the title track, are especially striking in this respect, almost a declaration of intent. The words are drastically processed in order to thwart the standard rock listener mechanism of identify and interpret (the very mode of trad rock deep-and-meaningfulness that *OK Computer* had dramatically revived).

"The real problem I had was with the 'identify' bit," says Yorke. "Even now, most interviews you do, there's a constant subtext: 'Is this you?' By using other voices, I guess it was a way of saying, 'obviously it isn't me'."

Turning the voice into an instrumental texture, Otherising it via effects, allowed Yorke "to sing things I wouldn't normally sing. On "Kid A", the lyrics are absolutely brutal and horrible and I wouldn't be able to sing them straight. But talking them and having them vocodered through Johnny's Ondes Martenot, so that I wasn't even responsible for the melody... that was great, it felt like you're not answerable to this thing."

Another vocal treatment Yorke resorted to was the Autotuner – most famous from Cher's "Believe", but widely used in contemporary R&B as an intermittent glister of posthuman perfect pitch added to particular lines or words. "We used Autotuner on *Amnesiac* twice. On "Pakt Like Sardines", I wasn't particularly out of tune, but if you really turn up the Autotuner so it's dead in pitch, it makes it go slightly..." he makes a nasal, depersonalised sound. "There's also this trick you can do, which we did on both "Pakt" and "Pull/Pulk Revolving Doors", where you give the machine a key and then you just talk into it. It desperately tries to search for the music in your speech, and produces notes at random. If you've assigned it a key, you've got music."

Elsewhere, Radiohead's 'vocal science' bypassed state of the art digitalia for antiquarian technology and the sort of ad hoc boffinry redolent of John Lennon and George Martin's techniques at Abbey Road during the late Beatles era (Yorke confesses that *Revolution In The Head*, Ian MacDonald's book detailing the recording of every Beatles song, was "my bedside reading all through the sessions for the albums"). On "You And Whose Army?", the muzzy vocal – which sounds like Morrissey sliding into a Temazepam coma – was an attempt to recapture the soft, warm, proto-doo-wop sound of 40s harmony group The Ink Spots. "We hired all these old ribbon microphones, but it didn't work because you need all the other gear, like the old tape recorders. So what we ended up using is an eggbox. And because it's on the vocal mic, and the whole band's playing at the same time, everything on the track goes through this eggbox."

Radiohead also used a device called the Palm

Speaker on "You and Whose Army?", creating a halo of hazy reverberance around Yorke's vocal. "The Palm Speaker is something else that Monsieur Martenot invented, to go with the Ondes," explains Greenwood. "It's a bit like a harp with a speaker in the middle of it. The strings are tuned to all 12 semitones of an octave, and when you play a note in tune, it resonates that specific string and it creates this weird kind of echo that's only on those pitches."

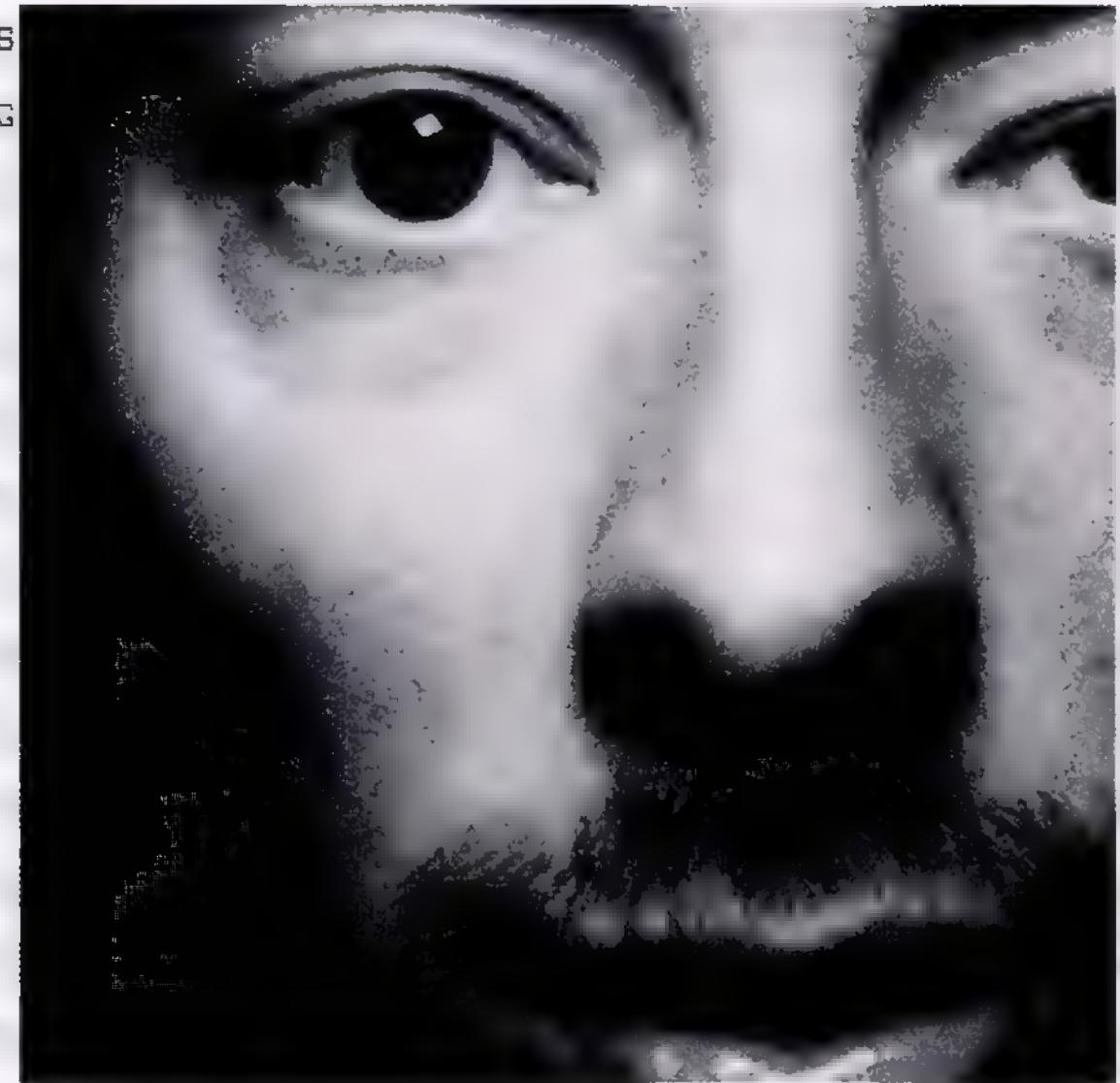
On *Kid A/Amnesiac*, Yorke performed his vocals knowing the kind of spatiality it would be moving through. The effects are always 'live', audible to him through headphones. "Nigel Godrich is very into this idea that if you're going to do something weird with a track, you make it weird there and then, rather than doing it in the mix afterwards, because the effect changes the way people play. They'll play to it. And that's really inspiring, because it's like having a new instrument. If you've got an incredibly cool reverb or something on your voice, suddenly you're really excited about what you're doing again."

The vocal tricknology on *Kid A* was perhaps the most offputting aspect for many listeners, prompting accusations of emotional withdrawal and a refusal to connect with the audience, or the absurd, frequently heard charge, "there are no tunes on the album" (actually, almost every track is structured like a song, and hauntingly melodic). The mixed response *Kid A* garnered in the UK revealed how the Britpop era has weakened the rock audience's (or more likely, the rock media's) ability to handle anything not blatantly singalong. At its lowest – Oasis – Britpop was barely more than amplified busking, disregarding the studio's sound-sculpting potential and relegating rhythm to a menial timekeeping role. Call it the new philistinism – as Greenwood commented acidly circa *Kid A*'s release, "people basically want their hands held through 12 "Mull Of Kintyre"s."

Surprisingly, the more trad-rock America gave *Kid A* an almost uniformly rapturous reception, with two exceptions. One was author Nick Hornby, in his *New*

"PEOPLE PRESUME EVERYTHING YOU WRITE IS PERSONAL. IT FEELS LIKE SOMEONE WALKING OVER YOUR GRAVE"

- THOM YORKE



Yorker rock column, who complained, absurdly, that the album was simply too demanding for adults exhausted by work/parenting, and accused critics who raved about *Kid A* of thinking like 16 year olds. The other was Howard Hampton in *The New York Times*, who dredged up that hoary old "it's just like the mid-70s again" scare tactic, a scenario in which Radiohead are the new Pink Floyd and it's high time we had another punk rock.

The Pink Floyd analogy has dogged Radiohead since *The Bends*. And there are parallels, for sure: the concept album flavour of *OK Computer*; the lavish artwork (there's a secret booklet concealed inside *Kid A*'s CD case); their obsessive attention to track-sequencing the albums to work as wholes; even the fact that both groups came from Oxbridge towns. Despite a dearth of real sonic similarity, Radiohead are often described by journalists as Floyd-influenced, which Greenwood fears may have stemmed from interview comments "from about five years ago, when I heard *Meddle* for the first time and liked half of it. And I felt a bit ripped off, because when I was at school, the popular post-punk myth was that Floyd were rubbish."

I'm hardly a fan of that group post-Syd Barrett, but it's worth at least querying why Pink Floyd is such an enduringly potent insult, such an instantly discrediting reference point. Johnny Rotten may have famously scrawled "I Hate" on his Pink Floyd T-shirt (but why did he own one in the first place, I always wonder?), yet of all the pre-1976 dinosaurs, the group were arguably the least decadent, corrupt and aesthetically bankrupt. 1975's *Wish You Were Here* contains anti-record biz sentiments that anticipate punk; *Animals* and *The Wall* are as bleakly no-escapist and apocalyptic in their view of modern society as anything from the post-punk vanguard. At one point in the mid-70s, Floyd even planned making an entire album using household implements, a gambit that would have surpassed in advance PiL's *Flowers Of Romance*, ATV's *Vibing Up The Senile Man*, Nurse With Wound, not to mention Matt Herbert.

There's a case for arguing that 1977-style three-chord punk was just a back-to-basics blip in the

continuum of UK art rock, and that 'Progressive' pretty much resumed in the form of post-punk, albeit shaped by some new sonic prohibitions/inhibitions. Before 1977, figures like Eno and Wyatt collaborated with Prog types like Robert Fripp and even Phil Collins. After punk, some of those early 70s art rockers fitted the new rules of cool (Eno producing Devo, No Wave, Talking Heads; Wyatt playing with Scritti Politti and recording for Rough Trade).

Perhaps the Pink Floyd comparison has less to do with any real stylistic parallels and more to do with the vein of inverted snobbery that runs through British rock culture, one symptom of which is an abiding discomfort with the notion of 'art rock' itself. "Too fucking middle class, that's our problem!" says Yorke. Radiohead met at the same Abingdon public school, where several members had classical music training of varying kinds. Most went on to university, Cambridge, in Colin Greenwood's case. But what are their qualifications in the university of real life? What right do they have to 'moan' about anything? How can such polite, well-educated, well brought-up, diligent, meticulous young men be 'rock 'n' roll'?

One of the things I like about Radiohead, though, is that they seem comfortable with their middle classness: not proud, conscious of the issue of privilege, but at the same time not adopting 'Mockney' accents or concealing the fact that they are widely read. *Amnesiac*'s title, for instance, was inspired by a passage Yorke read in a book about Gnosticism. Even the fact that Greenwood went AWOL from the original interview at Courtyard's office in order to watch the first day of cricket at Lords seems, perversely, part of their authenticity.

"People distrust learning, don't they?" muses Greenwood. "There's all these stories of Miles Davis going to the Juilliard academy and poring over classical scores in the library. That side of Miles is glossed over a bit in favour of the living on the edge stuff. But it just makes me love him even more, the idea of him wanting to get musical inspiration from everything and everywhere." For his part Yorke attacks what he calls

"the noble savage idea of creativity" as "a really destructive myth" and "a trap" for the artist.

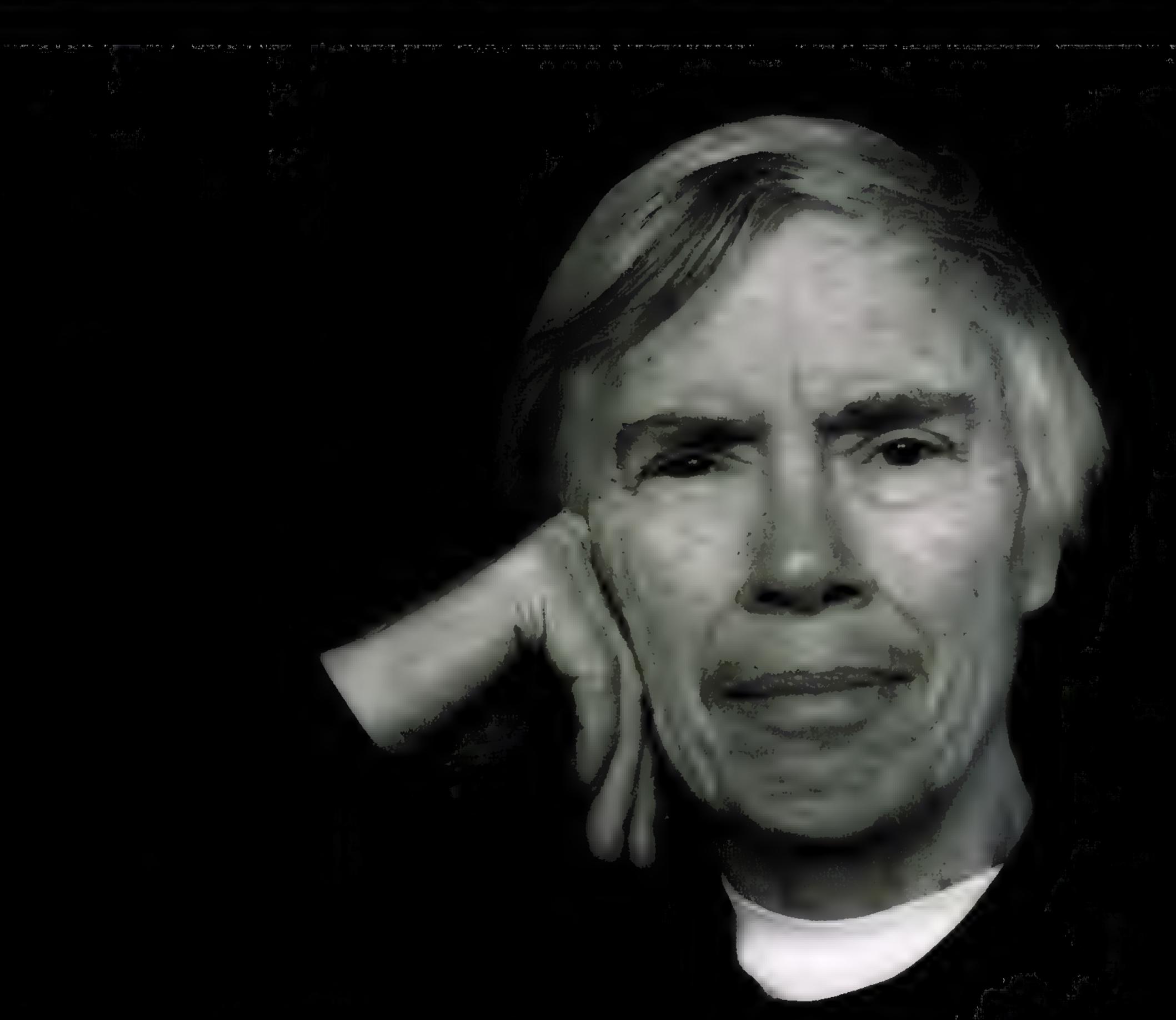
"At one point, I started to believe that if you sit down and analyse what you're doing, worry about it, then you're not being your true self. But, for instance, Mark E Smith is not a noble savage – he's a fucking intellectual. With us, though, there's this suspicion of calculation all the way through what we do. Where does this come from, the idea that if you sit down and think about something you can't be emotional in any way? Maybe it's some sort of punk hangup.

"Sometimes, I think they're right about us," he muses. "Sometimes we do over-think things." He thinks that's why accusations of humourlessness are often directed at Radiohead, despite the fact that in interviews they're perfectly witty. "People used to throw that at The Smiths all the time, but Morrissey obviously had a sense of humour. Even something as dark as "How Soon Is Now" has a quippy element." Imputing humour deficiency is one of the classic levelling weapons in the arsenal of English anti-intellectualism, used to deflate anything radical ("bloody humourless feminists") or pretentious and arty. "How dare Radiohead take themselves so seriously?" is the subtext of much of the animus against *Kid A/Amnesiac*. Witness the *NME* album review that began with the words, "The unbearable heaviness of being Radiohead". But it's precisely the group's reinvocation of art rock earnestness, their refusal of levity and frivolousness, that is actually dissident within a pop culture pervaded with post-*Loaded* bluff, blokey cheer, heterosexualised camp – from Robbie Williams to the rash of 80s nostalgia TV – and 'won't get fooled again' cynicism that aims to trivialise intensity or vision-quest of any kind.

Yorke says he can understand the demand for light entertainment, though. "The reason people are so into escaping is there's a fucking lot to escape from," he concludes. "In a way, the last thing anyone needs is someone rubbing salt in the wounds, which is sort of what we're doing." □ *Amnesiac* is out now on Parlophone. Radiohead Website: www.radiohead.com

Invisible Jukebox

Every month we play a musician or group a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear



Pauline Oliveros

Tested by Christoph Cox. Photo by Gisela Gamper

For nearly half a century, Pauline Oliveros has been at the forefront of musical innovation, from minimalism and free improvisation to electronica, Ambient and World Music. She was born and raised in Houston, Texas, and although both her mother and grandmother were piano teachers, Oliveros fell in love with the accordion. At the age of 20, she left for San Francisco, where she discovered Gregorian chant, hung out in Beatnik bars and began studying composition with Robert Erickson at San Francisco State University. In 1961, with her friends Terry Riley, Morton Subotnick and Ramon Sender, Oliveros gathered up a pile of cheap electronic equipment – oscillators, amplifiers, effects, and tape recorders – set them up in an old house on Russian Hill and called it the San Francisco Tape Music Center. There she began experimenting with tape delay systems, running signals through multiple tape recorders to produce dense and throbbing patterns of sound in real time.

In the 1980s Oliveros worked with engineers to develop the Expanded Instrument System, a computer driven array of sound processors that allows improvisors to produce delays, feedback and pitch modulations in real time by operating a series of footpedals and switches. In the late 80s, Oliveros founded The Deep Listening Band with David Gamper and Stuart Dempster. Further evidencing her obsession with echo, delay and sonic space and time, DLB are fond of performing deep underground in caves, cisterns and drained reservoirs.

Throughout her career, Oliveros has staunchly supported women musicians and composers, advocating gender equality in music. Last summer, at the Out-Of-Doors Festival hosted by New York's Lincoln Center, Oliveros premiered her seven hour *Lunar Opera*, a musical and spiritual tour through the mythical country of Lunarus on the far side of the moon. She has just returned from Madison, Wisconsin, where she debuted her most recent opera, *Io And Her And The Trouble With Him*, which retells "from a matriarchal perspective" the myth of Io the Argive princess.

The Jukebox took place at Oliveros's home in Kingston, in New York's Hudson Valley.

MORTON SUBOTNICK THE WILD BULL (EXTRACT)

FROM SILVER APPLES OF THE MOON/THE WILD BULL (WERGO) 1968

It's all synthesized. But I don't know who this is.
It's by an early colleague of yours.

You don't mean Mort? You do mean Mort! Well, I guess I can see that. Yeah.

Silver Apples Of The Moon would have been the more obvious choice.

The Wild Bull? I don't know if I would recognise either one of them right now. It's been such a long time. It sounded familiar. And the synthesis sounded really sort of, well, almost naive, if you're thinking about it in today's terms. But on the other hand, it has a kind of analoguey feeling to it. Now that I do know who it is, well, of course, it's very clear.

You and Subotnick were both using the Buchla Box synthesizer in the mid-60s, but doing very different things with it.

Both Mort and Ramon [Sender] were the ones who gave [synthesizer inventor] Don Buchla the most input about what the Box should be. I wasn't so much part of that discussion. Mort made the first pieces on it. It was almost like Mort's Box. And he worked with Don for a long time on all these different things.

The sequencing that you're hearing now was unheard of at the time. As a historical document it's quite amazing to hear. I mean, sequencing now is something anyone can do anytime, anywhere. But this was the first time that you could do it in this way. He certainly made a great use of it and advised Don in that direction, I'm sure. Because before, he was cutting and splicing tape.

I always found ways to get around that, so that I could make the music as a gestural formation in real time and not have to construct it bit by bit. That's a big difference between what Mort and I were doing. I mean, he pieced this together. He could sequence long sections, but he still would work with it to shape it in a variety of ways. And if you listen to [my 1967 piece] *Alien Bog* or one of those, I mean, those are played straight through. It was the Buchla Box playing, just played straight out, which was my thing, my way of working with it.

JOHNNIE ALLAN "PROMISED LAND"

It's some New Orleans blues guy. Sounds like it's got a little zydeco in it. It's not Clifton Chenier, but it's someone in that circle.

The guitarist and singer is Johnnie Allan. But it's Belton Richard's accordion that I wanted you to hear. I used to listen to this stuff when I was a kid, because I lived in Houston and New Orleans is only 400 miles away. I had some real favourite Cajun stuff, like Harry Choates who used to play "Jole Blon". I loved that record. When I was 15 years old or so, I'd play it on the jukebox. I'd play it over and over, put my nickel in the jukebox and wow!

You started playing accordion when you were...

Nine years old. My mother, who's a piano teacher, brought one home. She was thinking of learning it and teaching it. I got really fascinated with it and wanted to learn to play it, so I did. The accordion itself was a really popular instrument in the 40s. There were big accordion schools in Houston. I like to tell the story that I played in a 100 piece accordion band at the rodeo. That was quite a sound [laughs]. This was World War Two time, so you'd play the Marines hymn and the Air Force song, and, you know, traditional songs, Christmas songs. But I had different ideas, because

when I was in high school I was in the concert band and we were playing lots of different kinds of things, and I'd want to play them on my accordion. I had a really wonderful teacher who played Bach and all kinds of things on the accordion, and was really on a crusade to elevate the repertoire of the instrument.

JOHN CAGE

CONCERT FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA FROM THE PIANO CONCERTOS (MODE) 1957-58

This could be a realisation of a Cage piece, maybe *Atlas Eclipticalis*, maybe one of those pieces where you overlay transparencies [to create the score].

Close. It's from the same period, Concert For Piano And Orchestra, with David Tudor on piano and live electronics.

Yeah, there you go! It was actually familiar. We did this piece in 1964 at the San Francisco Tape Music Center at a festival that we called the Tudorfest. I had wanted to do this festival because nobody was playing Cage's music. There was a big argument raging all over the place about philosophical issues – Cage versus Schoenberg, or whatever – but nobody was playing the music. So we did it. It was a really crucial experience. Mort was playing, Ramon, John Chowning, Loren Rush, Stuart Dempster, Terry Riley. The point is that his music opened up new pathways. It certainly did for me.

For Cage there was always some sort of score.

You're not interested in scoring your pieces, are you? I'm interested, if it works. But if it limits or impedes the flow of the music, I'd rather not use a score. My scores are usually mnemonics; and you can dispense with them once you've got the idea.

FRIPP & ENO

"THE HEAVENLY MUSIC CORPORATION" FROM NO PUSSYFOOTING (EG) 1973

OK, well I'm gonna guess. Could it be somebody like Kitaro?

It's the working method I was interested in having you listen to.

There's a synthesizer and looping and feeding back. **It's Robert Fripp's guitar run through Brian Eno's tape delay system.**

Oh, Fripp and Eno, oh my goodness! Well they'll be disappointed to hear me say Kitaro!

This kind of tape delay experiment is clearly indebted to the kind of work you were doing in the mid-60s. Well, the only thing that I had out at that time, from 1966, was *I Of IV* and *Sound Patterns*. So it could come from that, or it could come from Terry [Riley] or Steve [Reich]. I don't really hear the guitar. It really sounds synthy. You could say that a drone is a drone is a drone [laughs]. But it's not so. There are intricate drones, and this doesn't seem that way to me. The synthesizer is so impoverished in terms of interesting noises and acoustics and things.

What interested you originally in the idea of tape delay and feedback?

The most interesting thing for me was not just the loops. That was only a means. What I was interested in were the standing waves and the ability to colour the sound. I really tried to mask the loops. I was interested in the idea of looping being a time machine. And that's what I'm interested in now, when I play my accordion with the Expanded Instrument System. You're playing in the moment, but you know that that moment will return in the future. But then when it does return in the future, you're dealing with the past. So it's expanding time. That becomes very interesting. And it's also very challenging to have the balance to be able to encompass past and future in the present. I think this is a kind of crude model of how the brain works. That's what we're always doing. But it's not interesting if you

Invisible Jukebox

just get a mechanical slapback. You have to work. You have to really listen to be able to do that.

With this kind of music [Fripp & Eno], I guess the idea is to get people into a zone, or to get the musicians into the zone. I try to do something different. When I'm performing, I'm modelling listening.

FRANCISCO LÓPEZ

UNTITLED #90 (EXTRACT)
FROM UNTITLED #90 (PRE-FEED) 1999

It's a white noise piece. I'm trying to think, 'now who would do that?' I don't know if it's someone in the Fluxus realm. Could be. But I don't know.

It's by the Spanish composer Francisco López, a recent advocate of 'profound listening'. For López, this has to be 'blind', listening to sound itself without any regard for its source. In your Deep Listening practice, does this matter to you?

Sure. Attention to sources gets in the way, because if you're busy trying to identify everything you're not listening anymore, you're categorising. There are two forms of listening, and categorising is one. When you're focusing and categorising, then you're losing the other part of how you can listen, which is in opening and encompassing. Focus gives you the detail. But focus is only momentary: moment to moment. Taking in the 360 degree environment is another thing. You don't have detail but you have the fabric or the weaving and the ongoing, continual process of what's happening. My teaching is to try to embrace that.

ELLEN BAND

"SWINGING SINGS"

FROM 90% POST CONSUMER SOUND (XI RECORDS) 1992

[After a few minutes] Oh, it's Ellen. I knew she just released a new CD, but I haven't heard it yet. Yeah, she's very individual. She's really developed her own thing. This sounds like a rusty swing.

Wasn't Ellen Band a student of yours in the mid-70s?

Yeah, I met Ellen in about 1973 at York University [in Toronto]. She took a musicianship course that I taught there, which was revolutionary [laughs]. She was hit by the world of classical training, which was not really very hospitable to women with any kind of imagination.

Have conditions improved for women in music since your 1970 article "And Don't Call Them 'Lady Composers'" was published in The New York Times?

Certainly the intellectual climate is receptive, and all of that. But it takes a long time for emotional programming to change. I've been writing a lot lately about the regression, the retro thing that's happening where women are not signing up for composition courses. I mean, at Mills, my composition seminar will have 11 men and two women. And this is a women's college, right? So what's this?! But it's everywhere. Women see no future for themselves as composers. They don't see any jobs for them in composition and they don't see performances of their music because, as far as the world of classical music goes, the establishment hasn't changed. You know, it goes on as if the 20th century didn't exist [laughs].

JOE MCPHEE

"SCORPIO'S DANCE"

FROM NATION TIME (CJR/ATAVISTIC) 1970

I don't know really who it is. The drummer might be Ronald Shannon Jackson. The trumpet might be Leo Smith.

It's Joe McPhee on trumpet and saxophone, a free jazz player you've previously worked with.

[Hearty laughter] Well, Joe is very chameleon-like. You never know what you're going to get out of him. This is one way he sounds. But he can sound completely different. So I'm not surprised that I didn't get it. He's

an amazing musician. We've played together a lot, of course. He played in *Lunar Opera*, which had everybody creating their own role, and then deciding on a cue to enter and a cue to exit. It could be anything, like a fly buzzing by or whatever. So Joe, as soon as anyone got out a cellphone, he would sidle up to them and play his didgeridoo [laughs]. And I think he had a boombox and would play some Moondog stuff. That was his character, he was being Moondog in the opera.

You've improvised with him on a few occasions.

Many times. He's played with The Deep Listening Band and he composed a piece for us. He doesn't live far away. But he's a tremendous musician who was kind of under-recognised for a long time. But, in a way, because he can be such a chameleon, you can't grab on to his style.

You've played a lot with improvisors, but your own work seems pretty far removed from free jazz.

You know, it's just music, as far as I'm concerned. And it's wonderful to be free enough to go in any direction you want. And I think Joe is one of those who can do that, which is one of the reasons why I like his work a lot. I feel the same way. I like to go in whatever direction my ears will take me.

The Deep Listening Band works in a metaphorical way. Each one of us will present a title, and that title, that metaphor, will guide what we do. We have been working together since 1988, so there's a shared feeling. But I play with a lot of different groups. I have two in California, one is The Circle Trio, the other is The Space Between, with Dana Reason on piano and Philip Gelb on shakuhachi. And then there's The New Circle Quintet, which has got [drummer] Susie Ibarra, Monique Buzzarté on trombone, Rosi Hertlein, violin and vocals, Kristin Norderval, vocals, and myself. It's wonderful having all these mixes. Different things happen. And then I played with Butch Morris and DJ Spooky and others at [the New York club] Tonic. I've also played horn in orchestras and bands. I've also played my accordion in different contexts too. So I might have a chameleon-like aspect as well.

THOMAS BRINKMANN

"0001"

FROM KLICK (MAX ERNST) 2001

Well, it's a loop. And, of course, it's electroacoustic. The sounds are fairly interesting. Sounds analogue. **It's made from locked grooves carved in vinyl by the German producer Thomas Brinkmann.**

I don't go for beats so much. My music is more breath-based than metrical. Why is that? Well, it's freer. Because as soon you get into a pulse pattern, it's like it says: locked groove. You're locked into it. Unless you're playing over it. I'm not saying it's bad. It's just a direction that I'm not terribly interested in. Everywhere you hear drum machines and the mechanical precision of these pulses, and I think about what it really means, which is locking people into certain kinds of things, into work patterns, locking into things which close off portals that might take you somewhere else. I mean, repetition and replication for human beings is... well, it's part of life, definitely. But innovation and new experience are another aspect of life. And it seems to me that the universe is providing this all the time, improvising its way, and, if we're closed off to that, then we're missing something very special.

THE GYÜTÖ MONKS

"MAHAKALA"

FROM FREEDOM CHANTS FROM THE ROOF OF THE WORLD (RYKODISC) 1988

Sounds like Tibetan horns and bells. Could be the Drepung Loseling monks.

It's the Gyütö monks.

They're the more famous ones, the Dalai Lama's monks. Terry [Riley] and I first heard them in 1974 in Berlin at this festival called Metamusik.

The Drepung Loseling monks performed in the Lunar Opera.

That's right. They have a centre in Atlanta at Emory University. Eight or ten monks a year come there. It just so happened that Jennifer Webster at the Lincoln Center Out Of Doors Festival had contacted these monks to do their show. And so they got connected into the *Lunar Opera*.

You're clearly interested in the spiritual aspects of the drone and overtone singing.

Well, yeah. These sounds are quite powerful, actually. The first time I heard some of the Tibetan horns, they really cleared my head in a really interesting way! The drone is a grounding form. It grounds you in a kind of timelessness, a feeling of timelessness, so that you could just be. I think that that's what drones are meant to do. Certainly that's true in Indian music, that the musicians can take flight, because the drone is there, and they can always come back to it. But, at the same time, in a very powerful drone, everything is happening. It's cycling through harmonics, overtones and other aspects of the sound.

REYNOLS

"MASIAMO TUPIDO"

FROM POLOS MOSCO (POLYAMORY/FREEDOM FROM) 1999

Sounds like some ceremonial thing, but I can't place it. **Actually, it's an uncharacteristic piece by some recent collaborators of yours: Reynolds.**

Reynolds! Ah, that's Miguel [Tomasin], the guy with Downs Syndrome, singing.

So how did that collaboration come about?

Isn't that something? [Laughs] I don't want to forget them for a minute! I met these guys in Buenos Aires when I did a Deep Listening workshop there and they were in it. It was really funny because, these guys, they seemed a little punky and spiky and I thought, 'Oh my god, what are they doing here?' And they would challenge me a bit and confront me with things. It was fun.

And then before I left I did a solo concert in the Biblioteca Nacional. You could hear a pin drop. I was playing acoustically. And [Reynolds members] Roberto [Conlazo] and Alan [Courtis] were sitting in the front row with eyes wide open, taking it in. They had made a pirate recording of my concert, which I didn't know about. Before I left, there was a farewell party for me at some artist's loft. Reynolds came to serenade me, and they all had brass instruments. They did this improvisation, and none of them knew how to play any of the instruments. It was great. I loved it.

After a few years they said they wanted to do a remix of my concert. So I said, "Well sure, go ahead. That sounds like fun." We went back and forth about what the title should be. At one point it was *Deep Heavy Listening Metal*, or something like that. And then, finally – because you know they named the group after Burt Reynolds – they came up with *Pauline Oliveros In The Arms Of Reynolds* [on White Tapes]. I thought that was just hilarious.

They're really great. They really consider Miguel to be their guru. And they work often with physically and mentally challenged people, doing workshops and stuff. They're so imaginative. Have you got the *10,000 Chickens Symphony* [on Drone Records]? Or *Blank Tapes* [on trente oiseaux]? That's the kind of group I like. I really think it's fabulous what they are doing. And it's wonderful to be connected with young people like that. □ *The Space Between Featuring Barre Phillips* is out now on 482 Music

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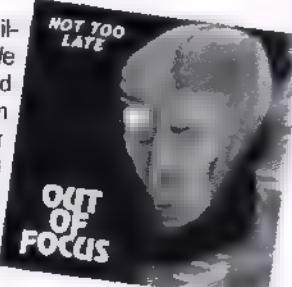
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FRITZ LANG'S 1927 SILENT FILM METROPOLIS PORTRAYED A FUTURE CIVILISATION CRUSHED BY THE WHEELS OF INDUSTRY. DECADES LATER, ITS NON-EXISTENT SOUNDTRACK INSPIRED A TSUNAMI OF SONIC TIME AND MOTION STUDIES, RANGING FROM GIORGIO MORODER'S DISCO MACHINERY AND KRAFTWERK'S CAMP ROBOTICS TO DETROIT TECHNO'S DYSTOPIAN DANCE AND MORE. WORDS: KEN HOLLINGS. ILLUSTRATION: NON-FORMAT

During the early 1920s, the Polish-American composer George Antheil, writing in the Dutch avant garde journal *De Stijl*, called for a future in which the traditional orchestra had become a thing of the past. In its place would be "vast music machines in every city" able to "open a new dimension in man" by making the people vibrate psychically in time with their powerful rhythms. As no traditional instrument could ever hope to meet the demands laid down by Antheil's "Musico-mechicano Manifesto", it was left to the remorseless whirring of the movie projector to provide an answer.

Silent movies supplied mass audiences at the dawn of the 20th century with a previously unknown means of perception, one that unified their responses through a collective visual beat. In 1925, German director Fritz Lang returned from a visit to the skyscrapers of Manhattan ready to transfer onto the cinema screen a depiction of that rhythmic connection between man, city and machine, one that extended far beyond its own technical accomplishments. A curious melange of German Expressionism, Soviet formalism and thrusting American materialism, *Metropolis* has continued to exert an influence over the Modern Dance, mediating music's relationship with technology through a set of images that continue to be read and reinterpreted even into the digital age.

BODIES AND NUMBERS

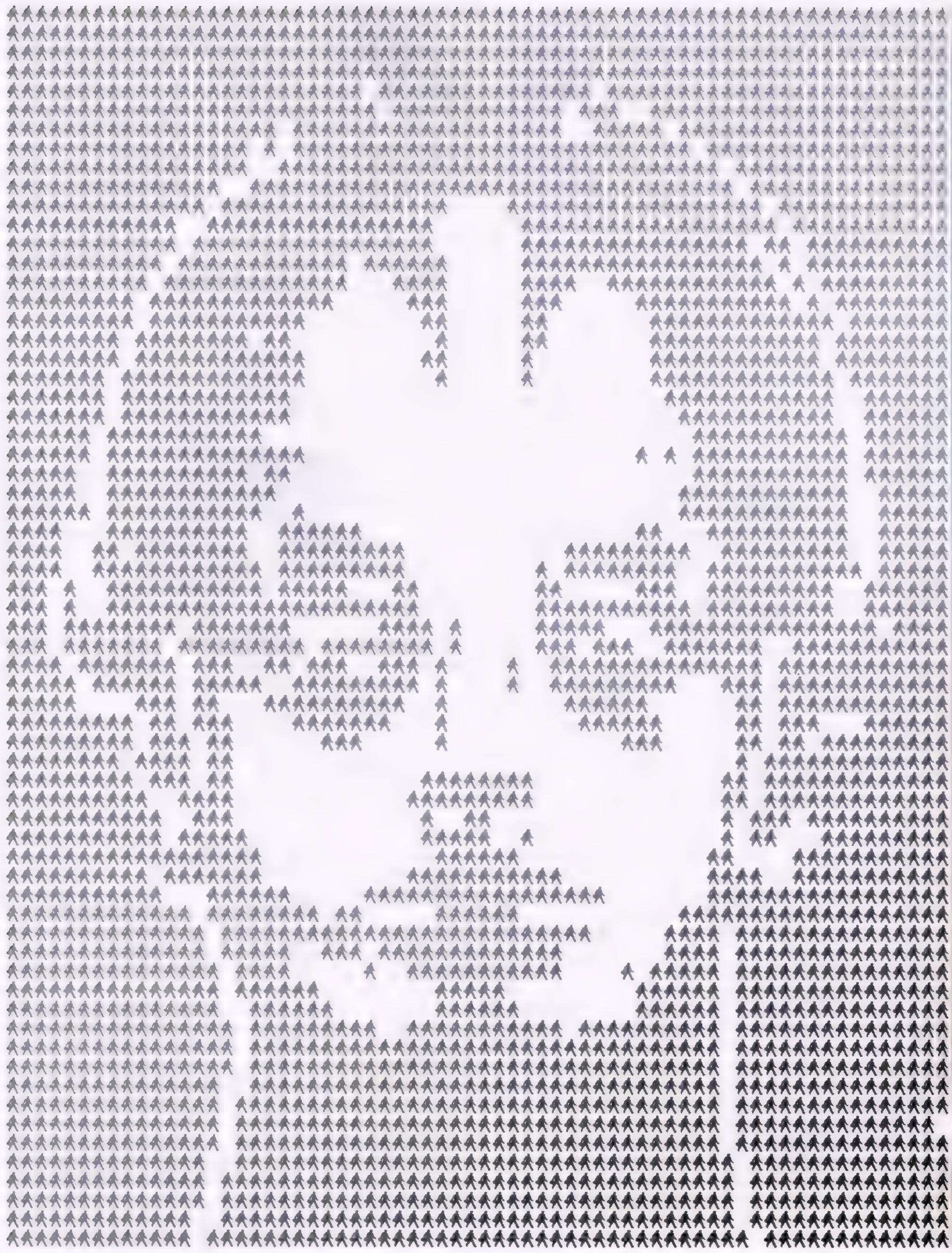
Back in 1895, while the Lumière Brothers were screening *The Arrival Of A Train At Grand Central Station* to excited Parisians for the first time, the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg staged a completely revised version of the Tchaikovsky ballet *Swan Lake*, with new choreography by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov. In Act II's "Entrance Of The Swans", the 24 members of the female corps de ballet file onto the stage in a long serpentine line that continually folds back upon itself, executing a precisely repeated series of steps. Machinelike and serene, each individual dancer copies and repeats the movements of those around her until each gesture becomes duplicated, restated and superimposed. The effect is comparable to peering through the slots of a zoetrope, a piece of Victorian parlour magic capable of creating the illusion of animated movement which predated the Lumière's earliest adventures in motion pictures by several decades.

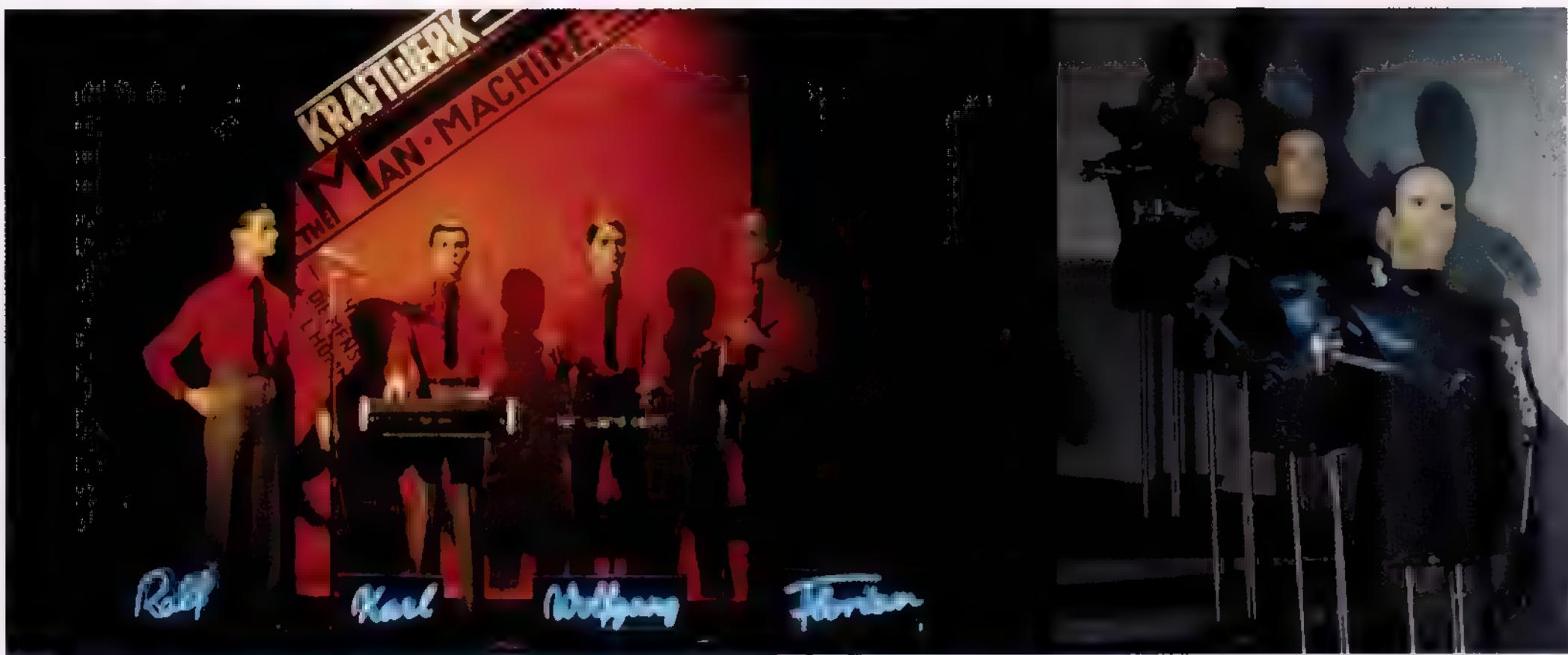
Human movement, enhanced by the dazzling flicker of repeated actions, had entered the age of mechanical reproduction. What once existed exclusively in three dimensions could now exist in only two. Completed in 1926, *Metropolis* was the first film to use extras in vast quantities – over 35,000 in all were drilled and regimented through the century's new spatial coordinates. The 'Tower Of Babel' sequence alone required 1000 unemployed extras with shaved heads, their grandly organised numbers ranged in vast columns across a desert terrain, exactly echoing the grey rows of machine minders and factory hands who shuffle in unison through the walkways and engine rooms of "the greatest city on earth".

A silent melodrama set in the oppressive world of 2026, *Metropolis* haunts the popular imagination more as a set of visual rhythms than a coherent narrative. In fact, many of its plot elements have more in common with *Swan Lake* than any of the German science fiction fantasies that were to follow. In *Swan Lake*, derived from a German folktale, the evil magician Rothbart transforms the beautiful Odette into a swan, then creates an evil twin Odile to seduce a handsome prince. In *Metropolis*, an evil magician, Rotwang, transforms a machine into the evil twin of a beautiful woman, Maria, to seduce an entire city.

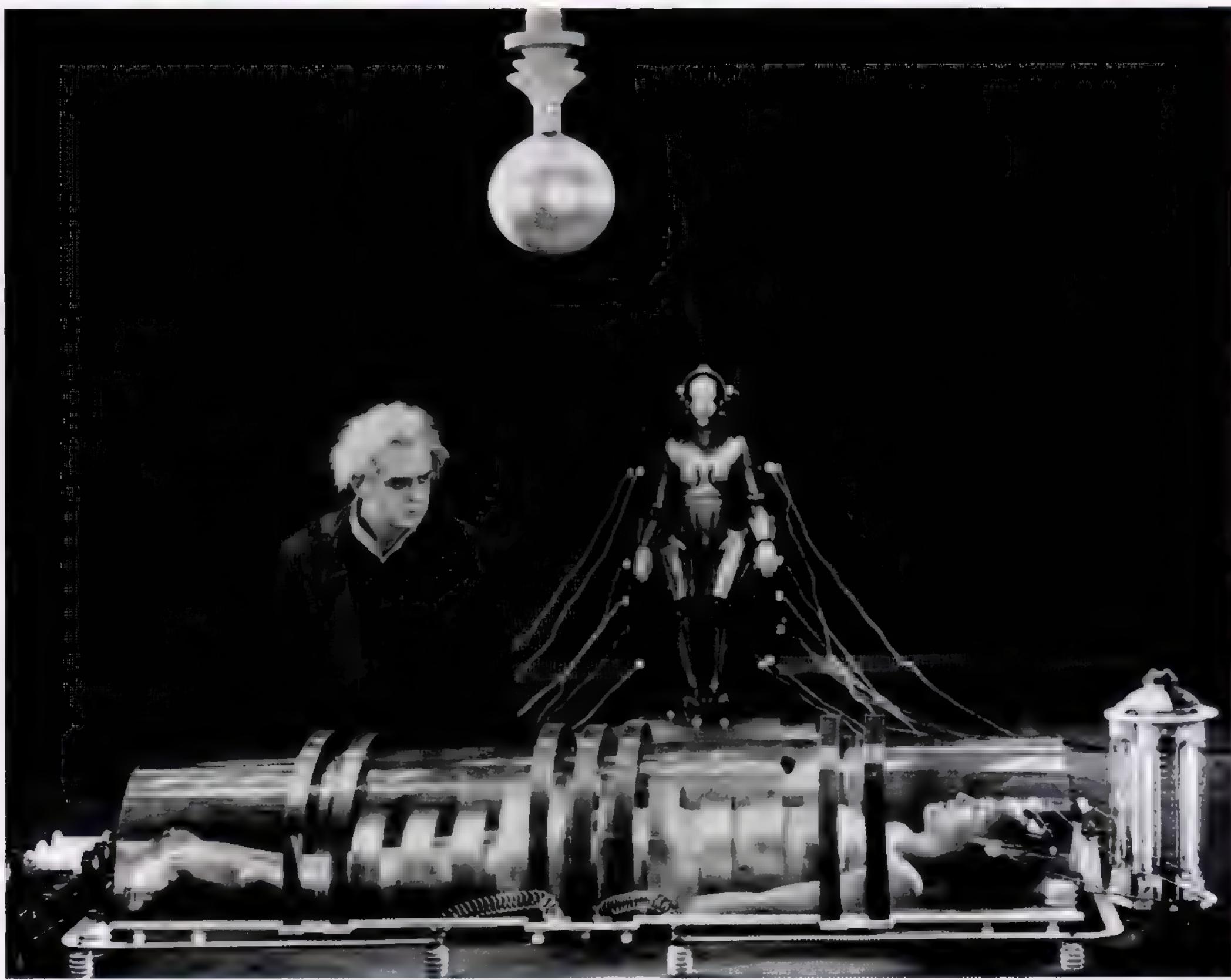
Having its origins in a novel by Thea Von Harbou, Fritz Lang's wife and an enthusiastic supporter of Adolf







Above, Kraftwerk, pop's cybernetic centurions Below: Scientist Rotwang (Rudolf Klein-Rogge) creates a twin sister for robot Maria (Brigitte Helm) in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927)



PHOTOS BFI STILLS (METROPOLIS), EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS KRAFTWERK TOP LEFT

Hitler, *Metropolis* locked step with the emerging spirit of the age by synchronising itself to the heavy industrial beat of the factory. Gears and pistons form abstract rhythmic patterns in the film's opening moments; then a title card announces "The day shift" in which the workers' movements are choreographed and disciplined by the machines. A soundless expression of regimented motion, *Metropolis* has challenged viewers ever since to impose their own soundtrack upon it.

TAYLORISM

By deploying his extras in such carefully coordinated ranks, Lang had swapped one kind of music for another. The beginning of Thea Von Harbou's version of *Metropolis* exposes German Expressionism's romantic underbelly by depicting Freder, son of the city ruler and the equivalent here of *Swan Lake*'s handsome prince, at the keyboard of a grand celestial organ, creating music out of cosmic forces. By contrast, the workers at the start of Lang's film are called to order by gigantic banks of factory sirens. The size of tower blocks, they regulate the carefully controlled movements of the masses, their swelling tones finding an echo in both the social-industrial aesthetics of the revolutionary 'concert for factory sirens' conducted in Baku in 1922, and the political economy of time and motion devised in America by Frederick Winslow Taylor. Between the enthusiastic flagwaving of the former and the empirical calculation of the latter lay the theoretical 'Biomechanics' of Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold who sought, via a blend of cabaret tunes, athletically drilled performers and Constructivist design, to bring about a 'Taylorisation' of the modern stage.

Drawing upon this emerging aesthetic, *Metropolis* became a filmic reminder of things to come, a mechanical ballet that constantly renewed itself with each successive generation. The original score, penned by Gottfried Huppertz for the film's Berlin premiere in 1927, can consequently never be more than an antique curiosity today. Even as a set of 78 rpm discs, featuring a speech by Fritz Lang himself, such titles as "Waltz From Metropolis", "Phantastic Dance" and "Danse Macabre" seem to emanate from a hazily remembered yet unmistakably romantic past.

Much more in keeping with the machine age is a spoof photograph, taken on the set of *Metropolis*,

showing Fritz Lang sitting in front of a modern drum kit, while Brigitte Helm, who portrays both Maria and her evil robot double in the film, poses with a saxophone. The picture hints at what kind of music is playing when Maria's mechanical doppelganger goes into a wild erotic dance to demonstrate the effectiveness of its human disguise to a carousing nightclub audience. A blend of futurist magic and precision engineering, the female (wo)man-machine meshes seamlessly with the beat of the modernist cabaret, creating chaos all around her while giving nothing away. Yes, sir, she can boogie, but she needs a certain song.

FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE

Across the Atlantic, however, *Metropolis* failed to engage the bustling capitalist sensibilities of a country where Lang's 21st century was already on its way to becoming concrete reality. *Metropolis*, after all, was the name of Superman's earthly home. "In the future," visionary American architect Hugh Ferriss declared in the late 1920s, "with the evolution of the cities, New Yorkers will literally live in the skies." Unfortunately, the colossal bunkers and looming towers he had been sketching out so confidently since the middle of the decade rendered human scale virtually negligible, reducing the heavens to a tiny grey blur, only glimpsed from some great forlorn distance. The grand monoliths of tomorrow were incorporated instead into the 20th Century Fox logo, or used as a backdrop to such light-hearted follies as *Just Imagine*, a musical comedy set in 1980 and featuring a huge model set directly inspired by *Metropolis*, right down to its miniature skyscrapers 250 storeys high.

By the 1950s, it was clear that Hollywood equated huge towers, robots and advanced technology with alien civilisations that were doomed to fail. In *This Island Earth* (1955), the tall structures of Metaluna have either been flattened by meteorites or moved underground, while in *Forbidden Planet* (1956), there is nothing left at all of the Krell race above the surface of their home planet. "Even their cloud-piercing towers of glass and porcelain and adamantine steel have crumbled back into the soil of Altair IV," mourns Walter Pidgeon's character, before playing a recording of atonal and arhythmic sounds supposedly made by Krell musicians 100 million years before, but actually

coaxed from circuits in Los Angeles by electronics pioneers Bebe and Louis Barron.

"INSPIRED BY EL LISSITZKY"

If America initially rejected Taylorism's reductionist aesthetic, associating clean lines, advanced technology and disciplined uniformity with wayward alien cultures, it couldn't hold out forever. Disco inaugurated the Taylorisation of the pop formula. Human geometry and industrialised gymnastics took control of the dancefloor, regulated by a constant, unwavering beat. Simple, effective and efficient, disco collectivised and unified. It expressed itself through slogans that could be repeated to the point of ambiguity. Like Maria's evil robot twin, however, it also couldn't wait to drive the people wild. So out of West Germany came Silver Convention's "Hot Stuff", featuring strings from The Munich Philharmonic and session drummer Michael Kunze, and "Love To Love You, Baby", a 17 minute sexual workout that marked the first successful encounter between Giorgio Moroder and Donna Summer, who would later burn the disco down together with the conveyor-belt eroticism of "I Feel Love".

What connected Kunze, Moroder and Summer was that they had each worked with German film and TV composer Peter Thomas, who had been busily exploring the possibilities of modern studio technology since the early 1950s. In 1966, Thomas was already using a vocoder to create a flat robotic voice for the opening credits to *Raumpatrouille*, a low-budget European space opera set in the year 3000. Counting down in unemotional German from ten to zero at the start of the main title theme, the voice spoke of electrical circuitry, machine intelligence and implacable technological progress. It also offered an audible response to Rotwang's silent cry of anguished triumph recorded on one of the title cards for *Metropolis*: "Isn't it worth the loss of a hand to have created the workers of the future – the machine men?"

Man, machine and the city of tomorrow all met in the impassive presence of the robot, but it remained a fractured moment of contact. As Joseph F Engleberger, the 'Father of Industrial Robots', observed: "A robot becomes more robotic the more it emulates the human being." One distinguishing attribute of Fritz Lang's robot is its supreme indifference to such a relationship. A burnished Art Deco apparition, it stands



Munich machinists: Giorgio Moroder and Donna Summer



at one ambivalent remove from both man and machine. Sheathed in synthetic skin and smiling crookedly, its malign wink when ordered to spread unrest among the workers finds a direct counterpart in the Russian Constructivist El Lissitzky's declamatory comment that, "We've had quite ENOUGH machine/machine/machine/machine". Over half a century later, and with a mixture of highbrow camp, art history and state of the art electronics, Kraftwerk extended the Soviet artist's emphatically repeated line into endless reverberation on the chorus to "The Man-Machine", the title track of their 1978 LP.

The mechanistic reformulation of human behaviour, from the mass rallies, parades and collective displays of callisthenics of the 1930s, through to Baccara's chanted declaration that "*We like the disco sound*", had remained primarily a political one. Kraftwerk's response to this traded on uneasy certainties and a troubled nostalgia for the past. Decked out in black, red and white, deploying all the sparse energetic formalism of a revolutionary agit-prop display, *The Man-Machine*'s artwork, "inspired by El Lissitzky", offered confused signals. The four members of Kraftwerk were depicted wearing red shirts, with a matching shade of lipstick, yet their stiff biomechanical poses had them facing resolutely to the right. This was propaganda with nothing to say, constantly overwriting itself right down to the Russian phrase, "Ja twoi sluga, Ja twoi rabotnick", meaning "I'm your servant, I'm your worker", that appeared in discreet Cyrillic script on the back cover. The phrase occurred again, repeated with calm passivity throughout the album's opening number, "The Robots". The song's continuous assertion, "We are the robots", offered a collective sense of self expressed through the voice of a single machine that had identified itself with a specific group. No longer simply content to click off numbers as it had done for Peter Thomas on *Raumpatrouille*, this was now a socially aware machine. It even danced.

Of the four tracks sequenced between "The Robots" and "The Man-Machine", three have little connection either to each other or the record's predominant theme. Locking "Spacelab", "The Model" and "Neon Lights" into place, however, was "Metropolis", evoking in its first moments the laboured plodding rhythm of the film's 'Central Dynamo Room' and the oppressive wail of the factory sirens. What followed was pure Moroder disco. A relentlessly busy electronic sound, it

had already been given a futuristic context thanks to Moroder's 1977 solo project *From Here To Eternity*, while its harsher industrial connotations were explored that same year on "Working The Midnight Shift", created for Donna Summer's *Once Upon A Time* LP.

Moroder was keenly aware of how artificial the premise for German 'mechanik' disco had become. His Munich Machine releases may have come packaged with pictures of dancing robots and credits listing "shop floor, electronics foreman, mechanics foreman, shop steward, apprentice, time and motion study", but his core players were drawn from all over Europe and America, including British Easy Listening supremo and Serge Gainsbourg sideman Alan Hawkshaw on keyboards. Disco was a social movie set against fake backdrops. It used electronics, flashing lights, back projection and smoke machines to convince the public that the future had arrived. In *Saturday Night Fever*, John Travolta spent his time at a disco called 2001 – located only a quarter of a century away from when *Metropolis* was scheduled to take place.

In 1978 Kraftwerk captured on *The Man-Machine* an idea of what *Metropolis* had become, then refined it down to a few simple but intriguing parameters. Identified on the sleeve as being "Produced in W Germany", despite the presence of Leonard Jackson, from ex-Motown producer Norman Whitfield's record label, at the mixing desk, the album had reaffirmed Taylorism's aesthetic possibilities. Rotwang's hand had been avenged.

POP FOR THE MASSES

"Why are you interested in a film that no longer exists?" was Fritz Lang's rather testy reply when invited to talk about *Metropolis* in the later years of his life. The final edit was taken out of his hands by UFA, the German production company, as the project spiralled over budget. The film was also deemed too long for the American market and severely cut back from 17 reels to ten. Even so, *Time* magazine's review expressed the opinion that "UFA might better have shut the eyes of its great cameras than permit them to reflect nonsense in such grandeur". One unfortunate result of such intervention was that some segments now appear to have been lost forever, while others exist in restorations only as still shots. But there was something about the grand nonsense of what remained that appealed strongly to pop audiences in

the late 1970s and early 1980s. The film's oppressive depiction of a divided society in which uniform ranks of workers laboured underground while a tiny ruling elite pursued dreams of art and power high above them reflected glam rock's darker fantasies of stardom. At the same time, punk saw those divisions pushed to extremes within its own culture: The Sex Pistols and The Clash sleeping with the rats while David Bowie and Queen enjoyed the uptown cabaret.

Extending itself vertically rather than horizontally, *Metropolis* was a city without middle class suburbs. It consequently overshadowed the bedrooms of New Wave kids eager to experiment with the film's industrial look: black boiler suits coupled with the heavy eye make-up and dark lipstick of the silent movie performer. With its blend of retro-futurism, alchemy and engineering, the movie also suited art rock's changing moods. Bebop Deluxe's 1977 live album *Live In The Air Age* came packaged in a sleeve prominently displaying stills from *Metropolis*, most notably on the front cover, which showed Lang's Man-Machine walking through Rotwang's laboratory. A massive pentagram covers one wall in the background. Art rock's sulky younger cousin, Goth, would also find plenty of distractions in Rotwang's world of secret chambers and underground cathedrals, where Death appears among the Seven Deadly Sins, playing a flute made from a human bone.

In 1984, Giorgio Moroder completed a gesture that Kraftwerk had wisely left hanging, by releasing his own version of *Metropolis*. With colour tinting, the insertion of sound effects and additional stills in place of missing scenes, it also boasted a rock soundtrack featuring Adam Ant, Jon Anderson, Bonnie Tyler, Pat Benatar, Billy Squire and Freddie Mercury. Just another day in paradise for the MTV generation, the Moroder revamp made a further concession to modern life by reducing the film's running time from 131 minutes to 87. That same year Queen used scenes from *Metropolis* – "purchased from the German government" – in their promotional video for "Radio Gaga", a somewhat mawkish celebration of pop's former powers. The song itself was performed on a replica of the great machine in the Central Dynamo Room with hordes of costumed Queen fans pressed into service as workers. Fritz Lang's original film hadn't been that big on irony either.

Five years on, and Madonna straddled an elaborate



Bitmap references: Jeff Mills

reconstruction of *Metropolis* in David Fincher's video to accompany the Shep Pettibone remix of her song "Express Yourself". Dressed in a black suit, a monocle screwed into her eye, Madonna was seen presiding over a grim industrial hierarchy of enforced labour and sweat-stained flesh. Her self-regarding empire of fiscal might expressed itself as a series of sadomasochistic power games involving the kind of muscular male models that photographer Herb Ritts had been capturing in romanticised blue collar poses throughout the 1980s. The video also successfully conveyed the extent to which House had transformed the libidinal economy of the Modern Dance by 1989. Thanks to such innovations as the Roland drum computer, the machines were now firmly in control of the dancefloor, and human movement had been Taylorised to a condition of virtual slavery.

As if to outline the complexities of this master/slave relationship still further, a single title card was inserted at the end of the video repeating Maria's conciliatory message to the workers of *Metropolis*: "The mediator between brain and muscle must be the heart." This totalitarian conjuring with orthodoxies, which had once supplied Thea Von Harbou's novel with its overriding moral stridency, had now become one of House's core values. It was technology's unrelenting beat that had finally brought brain, muscle and heart into line with each other. For the first time, Maria and her evil robot twin were both speaking the same language.

ART AND TECHNOLOGY: A NEW UNITY

Throughout the 1990s, as the date in which *Metropolis* is set grew closer, while that of its initial release receded, the film's regimented silence attracted a growing number of musical interpretations. In 1994 the original music was dusted off for the release of a newly restored print in Paris. The following year saw a piano transcription of Huppertz's score, courtesy of MIT Professor of Music Martin Marks, plus the creation of a new soundtrack by Martin Matalon at the IRCAM studios in Paris for the Munich Filmmuseum. Electronic ensembles such as The Club Foot Orchestra and The Alloy Orchestra, the latter featuring movie composer Caleb Sampson on synthesizers, also provided live accompaniments for screenings of *Metropolis* in the United States. Such exercises remained academic at best, trapped within lengthening historical perspectives on the movie rather than transcending such limitations.

With the advent of Techno, however, *Metropolis* was gradually transformed from a pop culture backdrop into an actual environment, a live set of stimuli capable of acting directly upon the mind and body. The steady collapse of the structures and energy flows that had once helped establish such worker cities as Chicago and Detroit now found expression in a radically decentralised and disciplined accumulation of rhythms. Kraftwerk's influence upon this new movement was discernible not only in Techno's enthusiasm for strict repetition and carefully controlled formalism, but also in its valorisation of the engineer as a creative entity. The design, implementation and manufacture of a music that no longer required the intervention of traditional instruments made heroes out of those who knew which buttons to push. Whether they cared to acknowledge it or not, producers and DJs on both sides of the Atlantic had aligned themselves with a long German tradition of engineer worship, of which Thea Von Harbou's *Metropolis* was only one example.

Where Kraftwerk introduced a clearly audible series of breaks and discontinuities into their machine music, Techno created something far smoother and more uniform. Individual compositions were allowed to elide with one another, extending their collective duration and range until the Techno DJ resembled an inmate of the Central Dynamo Room stooped over his steel turntables labouring to create sets that could last anything up to ten hours at a time.

In post-industrial society, with unemployment rising, dance assumed all the organisational attributes of work. Observed from within such a context, Techno had taken on the aims and attributes of George Antheil's Musico-mechicano Manifesto, but unambiguously on its own terms. A track like Kenny Larkin's "Metropolis", released on Richie Hawtin's Plus 8 label in 1995, is a baleful piece of sonic abstraction, in which the vast unrelenting machinery of Fritz Lang's city has been reduced to an emphatic counterpoint, overlaid by the textured approximation of a factory siren's extended wail. A distant echo of Kraftwerk's own "Metropolis", the track successfully establishes itself as the simplification of a simplification.

REWIRING TECHNOPOLIS

Jeff Mills has taken this process a stage further, both as the composer of a glistening Techno soundtrack

inspired by *Metropolis* and as the director of an hour-long '21st century' reinterpretation of the film, screened at the official German government reception held at the start of this year's 51st Berlin Film Festival. Just as the movie projector had used motion to create the simulacrum of movement, so Mills's post-industrial soundtrack to *Metropolis* was a bitmapped reconstruction of an artificial world: the digital illusion of heavy machinery and vast industrial forms in action engineered by a man who, like Lang himself, was a former student of architecture. Mills and Larkin have between them managed to relocate the city's soaring citadel of progress in the dead factory spaces of their native Detroit. The grand historical design of *Metropolis* emerges as a means of perception.

Detroit producer Neil Oliviera's *Black Buildings* project, released under the name of The Detroit Escalator Company, is a sparse collection of sonic constructions accompanied by Oliviera's own minimalist paintings depicting tower blocks in densely ordered configurations. British Techno artist James Ruskin's recent *Submission* album on Tresor is packaged with carefully processed photographic studies of overbearing architectural forms evoking an intense state of paranoia.

Progress is revealed as a state of perpetual crisis in which production and consumption, and the past and the future, are overlaid upon each other. It's also a reminder that we are already living in someone else's future. On "MFRFM (Music For Robot For Music)", Japanese Techno producer Yoshinori Sunahara superimposes an old recording of "No 1 Metropolis Fan" Forrest J Ackerman - Hollywood's foremost archivist of horror, sci-fi and B-movie memorabilia - talking about the film over the clattering forward momentum of a drum machine, thereby allowing a complex ordering of associations to come into being. Ackerman speaks of his childhood experience of seeing *Metropolis* for the first time, comparing the slowness of the robot's first movements with those of an Egyptian pharaoh rising from his throne: a being mummified in advance of itself. "That's quite a few years yet," Ackerman remarks of the movie's setting in 2026. "Do you suppose we'll have to wait that long to see robots? I doubt it. Actually, the robots are already among us." They have been for some time. □ Ken Hollings's novel *Destroy All Monsters* will be published by Marion Boyars in September

Surveying the lives of the first generation of free jazz pioneers, it's tempting to subscribe to a kind of conspiracy theory. Despite the concerted efforts of a handful of festivals and labels, many of the musicians who broke down the doors of perception and opened the way for today's free music are struggling for work. Of the pioneers, most of them still below retirement age, some have attained the status that allows them to demand substantial remuneration (Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp); others sustain themselves through sheer hard graft (Noah Howard; the indefatigable William Parker). But many have simply disappeared or died in abject poverty (Giuseppe Logan, Marzette Watts, Arthur Jones, to name a few). While a new generation of musicians in Chicago and elsewhere ride to relative fame on a wave of nostalgia for the 'golden age' of Albert Ayler and Frank Wright, many of the original, participating musicians – Sunny Murray, Sonny Simmons – are still scuffling to make ends meet.

Another such player is tenor saxophonist, flautist and vocalist Arthur Doyle. Born on 26 June 1944 in Birmingham, Alabama, Doyle has played with a host of free jazz luminaries, including Milford Graves, Noah Howard, Bill Dixon and Alan Silva, as well as alt.guitar heroes Rudolph Grey and Keiji Haino. In the process he has become something of an underground cult hero himself, despite releasing just 13 albums and a handful of limited edition singles since 1969. Through the good offices of Sunny Murray, with whom he has recently played a string of dates in Europe, I managed to track Doyle down to Paris's Studio Des Islettes, a tiny and rather shabby jazz club tucked away up a sidestreet behind the Gare du Nord, where he played two Sunday evening gigs with pianist Bobby Few to an audience of barely a dozen people. Told with remarkable candour and dignity, his story charts the hopes and fears of a whole epoch of jazz history.

"My mother and father had very little education," Doyle begins, "but the five of us [children] all got university degrees. Three of us got Masters degrees, two got Bachelors of Science. They became schoolteachers and engineers. I'm the crazy one, I'm the black sheep of the family – I was into jazz! There was a jazz station in Birmingham, Alabama. Jazz has always been important in Birmingham."

Doyle's earliest exposure to jazz came through the swing of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington (like his future playing partner Noah Howard, he was later blown away by the tenor sax of Ellington sideman Paul Gonsalves). Originally drawn to the alto saxophone, he took lessons from a family friend called Otto Ford. "He was way ahead of his time for Birmingham, Alabama. He was a genius, but he had to clean buses to make a living." Moving to Nashville to study at Tennessee State University, he played jazz with

Horace Silver sideman Louis Smith and ex-Sun Ra Arkestra member Walter Miller, as well as R&B with local groups. "There was a really active jazz and R&B scene in Nashville," Doyle explains. "Most of Ray Charles's orchestra came from there, along with musicians like David 'Fathead' Newman, Joe Guy and Cleveland Eaton." In 1965 he played in a big band led by pianist Donny "The Ghetto" Hathaway, and also backed a young Gladys Knight, who was "on a little tour before she made it big".

After graduating from the university, Doyle went first to Detroit in trumpeter Charles Moore's big band, but soon realised he wasn't going to find work there. "Everybody was dressed like pimps with straight hair and driving Cadillacs. I didn't fit in," he sighs. Returning to Alabama, he hooked up with Johnny Jones And The King Casuals, an R&B act that allowed him to tour as far as Boston, where he also played in a sextet led by Frank Washington. Finally arriving in New York in 1967, he contacted singer Leon Thomas, whose brother Shiene he knew from University and who was then living in Harlem. Around this time, Leon was a member of Pharoah Sanders's group, but although Doyle recalls sitting in with Sanders a number of times, the decisive encounter that pushed him into free jazz was with the titanic drummer Milford Graves.

"A friend of mine named Leroy Wilson was walking down the street in Harlem and ran into Milford Graves," Doyle reminisces. "Milford was set up there with Amiri Baraka and those cats, and looking for musicians to play the free jazz, so he gave Leroy his number and I called him up. He didn't really like what I was doing, because I was still playing bebop. He wanted somebody like Albert Ayler, who I didn't know at the time. I played with Milford, Arthur Williams, Hugh Glover and Joe Rigby, and I started working on my own particular style: free jazz soul."

Unlike the saxophonists who evolved into free playing by subverting the stylings of bebop (John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Sonny Simmons), Doyle came to it from a similar angle to Ayler and Frank Wright: via gospel, soul and R&B. Practising one day with a faulty reed, he discovered by chance the extraordinarily gritty sound that could be produced by singing and blowing into the horn at the same time. The resulting technique, which he called the "Voice-O-Phone", coupled with the kind of gutsy honkin' and screamin' which Doyle inherited from a generation of R&B tenormen, was a revelation to him in a free jazz context, and he even tried to patent his discovery – a rather misguided move, since Rahsaan Roland Kirk had been singing through his flute for several years, and Dewey Redman had happened upon the same saxophone technique when he arrived in New York, also in 1967.

Doyle was soon in demand. Charles Stephens, a trombonist and childhood friend from Birmingham who

later featured on his first solo album, *Alabama Feeling*, introduced him to Sun Ra, who also originally hailed from the Magic City. Doyle recalls that Ra "wasn't that interested in talking about Birmingham at that stage", but invited him to sit in with The Arkestra on several occasions during its long and legendary residency at the notorious Slug's Saloon. Like a number of other musicians orbiting the outer reaches of Ra's solar system – notably guitarist Sonny Sharrock, whom Doyle knew but never played with – he was never tempted to move into The Arkestra's communal house on East 3rd Street. He eventually turned down an offer to join The Arkestra for its historic appearance at the 1969 Newport Festival, because he had a gig in Harlem already booked on the same night. "Told Sun Ra I couldn't make it," he murmurs. "Milford Graves told me later I should have, that they were going to invite me into The Arkestra, but I wanted to stay kind of independent. I had a job working as a caseworker in a welfare office in the Bronx. That was a tough job. I worked there for a couple of years."

Significantly, Doyle did accept an offer to join alto saxophonist Noah Howard's group, which included trumpeter Earl Cross, pianist Leslie Waldron, bassist Norris Jones (aka Sirone) and drummer Muhammad Ali. (The group participated in a 1967 concert with Albert and Donald Ayler at New York's Town Hall, which was sadly not recorded.) "Arthur was always hanging around," recalls Howard. "I think he worked well in the group because I gave him the space to do his thing the way he wanted to do it." Originally from New Orleans, Howard had arrived in New York from San Francisco in the mid-60s, and already had two fine ESP albums under his belt when he went into the studio in March 1969 to record *The Black Ark*, which, like his later *Village Vanguard* album, has long been unavailable – due to contractual wrangling, Howard explains. Hence it has become one of those mythical 'lost treasures' that surface at Internet auctions for astronomical prices. But the record is well worth hunting down, whatever the price, in order to experience the molten power of Arthur Doyle in full flight. On "Domiabra", for instance, he sounds as if he is trying to blow his whole body through the saxophone – a tour de force comparable with Pharoah Sanders's wildest solos, a cry of pure fury. But was Doyle angry? "No," he laughs, in his Alabama drawl. "That was just the way I was at the time. There was a big revolution going, with Dr King, Malcolm X, [boxer] Mohammed Ali, and we were playing for that. We were part of that."

A review of the album by Richard Williams in a 1972 issue of *Melody Maker* described Doyle as "dangerous... He never plays anything you could recognise, just furious blasts of rage. It sounds more like raw energy than anything I've ever heard. He's nasty, man..." It was this review that caught the eye of



Legendary wandering saxophonist Arthur Doyle has been pursuing free jazz's eternal flame for nearly four decades. In this exclusive Paris interview, he recalls his encounters with fellow travellers Milford Graves, Sunny Murray, Noah Howard and Rudolph Grey, and how his quest was nearly thwarted by the CIA and five years spent in a French jail.

Words: Dan Warburton

Photos: Thierry Trombert

Redemption songs





"There was a conspiracy in the 1970s against free jazz. Government and police fucking with musicians. They got people to go mainstream. I didn't want to play that, I wanted to play free jazz soul. I'm happy underground"

guitarist Rudolph Grey, with whom Doyle formed the first edition of The Blue Humans in 1978, of which more later.

Though busy in the early 70s playing with Bill Dixon, Sam Rivers, Andrew Cyrille and Dave Burrell, and forming his own group with Charles Stephens and Juma Sultan, in 1972 Doyle suffered the first of several nervous breakdowns.

"I just couldn't take all this conspiracy from the United States government," he complains. "We were up in Harlem with all the revolutionaries. I just wanted to play the music, but we were pushed into something else. Police raiding the clubs and everything. There was some dirty business with Albert [Ayler]'s death. Joe McPhee told me the police had something against me. Sunny Murray and I were talking about this recently, and he says there was some conspiracy thing against free jazz from the beginning. I think the United States government had something to do with it. Between 1972 and 1974 I wasn't working at all. I was in New York, but I was recuperating from my nervous breakdown."

Conspiracy or not, no recording of Doyle's playing has come to light from the period between 1969 and 1976, when he recorded the *Bäbi* album with Milford Graves and reeds player Hugh Glover. Doyle finally moved out of the city ("to get out of the rat race, the killing and struggling and all that I don't believe in"), to upstate New York, where he worked as an employment counsellor and CV writer. He recalls that Hugh Glover apparently quit music soon after the recording of *Bäbi* to work in a drug rehab centre.

Another difficult to find album originally released on the IPS label, *Bäbi*, is a ferocious three movement blowout recorded live in March 1976 at New York's WBAI Free Music Store. Though Doyle claims the piece "was eight or nine years in the making – we talked about it for a long time", the raw, tribal power of Graves and Doyle trading war cries is bloodcurdling, and the audience reaction near ecstatic. Sitting in the audience was Rudolph Grey, who had been "keeping an eye out" for Doyle ever since reading that *Melody Maker* review of *The Black Ark* some four years earlier.

When Doyle played at the Brook, a loft space on West 17th Street, in the autumn of 1977, Grey made contact and the two exchanged phone numbers. The concert at the Brook – a venue managed by Charles Tyler, with whom Doyle formed the DRA label in the same year – was significant for another reason. It was recorded and subsequently released as *Alabama Feeling*, Doyle's first solo album. Originally released in an edition of 1000 copies, three years ago it was reissued on CD by DRA, mastered from vinyl complete with surface noise and dodgy editing.

On this rarely heard classic, Doyle is joined by old Birmingham friends Charles Stephens on trombone and Rashied Sinan on drums (Sinan's only other notable appearance on record was on saxophonist Frank Lowe's extraordinary 1973 ESP album, *Black Beings*). Sinan also brought along Bruce Moore, a percussion student of his, "to give it more rhythmic feel", and Richard Williams's [not the *Melody Maker* critic] meaty electric bass completes the line-up. From the opening, magnificently titled track "November 8th Or 9th – I Can't Remember When", the album powers ahead with thrilling energy playing that matches the best releases on ESP and BYG/Actuel.

Doyle and Rudolph Grey first played as The Blue Humans at Max's Kansas City on 10 December 1978, sharing the bill with No Wave groups Mars and DNA. Drummer Beaver Harris was added to the group in early 1979 (Rashied Sinan stepped in when Harris was unavailable), and over the course of "six or seven gigs", the trio was the first to "open up the punk rock section to jazz", says Doyle. "Rudolph Grey's idea. Take the music to another audience. Young white kids, that's the lifeblood of the music, young middle class white kids. If they can put you on, you get the music across. That's what Thurston Moore understands. Sure, I regretted the fact there weren't many black kids there listening to us with The Blue Humans. Back in 69, Milford and I used to play in Harlem in the streets and the black kids really dug us, you know."

At the beginning of the 1980s, and like many marginalised black American musicians before him,

Doyle suddenly felt a strong pull towards France. "I just went, like that – nobody invited me – I always wanted to go to Paris," is the only explanation he can give. Following a brief exploratory visit in 1981, he returned to New York to play with The Blue Humans at the legendary Noise Fest in June, sharing the bill with Glenn Branca. It was the last time Doyle, Grey and Harris, who died in 1991, played together as a trio.

In 1982 the saxophonist returned to Paris, playing with Alan Silva's Celestial Communication Orchestra on *Desert Mirage*, a double album released by Silva's IACP label. Doyle played lead tenor in a big band mainly comprised of students from Silva's revolutionary jazz school, the IACP (Institut Art Culture Perception). Though the long, ecstatic freeform jams of The CCO's sprawling 1970 BYG/Actuel triple album *The Seasons* (recently reissued on vinyl by the Italian label Get Back: see *The Primer*, *The Wire* 208) are replaced by intricately voiced, Gil Evans-like arrangements, and the recording quality leaves much to be desired, Doyle's all too brief solos are inspired. "We recorded another set with that band," he remembers. "I solo more on the second set! I hope that'll be released someday. It was beautiful working with Alan, I love Alan a lot. I'd never played with him in the States – first time I played with him was in Europe. He gave me work. I taught at his school, and he got me some private students too."

Shortly after the recording of *Desert Mirage*, Doyle found himself in another kind of jam: he was accused, falsely as it would eventually transpire, and found guilty of committing a double rape, and spent the next five years moving around the French prison system.

"They framed me up with two American girls and another fellow. A lot was spoken at my trial about my first nervous breakdown. It was a set-up job, to drive me insane. It was hard for my mother when I was in jail, with the CIA, FBI and the government harassing her and the whole family. But she dealt with it best she could. Girls finally broke down and said it was no rape."

Denied access to a saxophone in prison, Doyle wrote his memoirs, which promptly and mysteriously disappeared from his cell, and occupied himself writing



The Songbook, an extraordinary collection of nearly 300 songs, selections of which feature on his 1990s solo albums, notably *Plays And Sings From The Songbook* (Audible Hiss, 1992), *Songwriter* (Ecstatic Peace!, 1994) and *Do The Breakdown* (Ain Soh, 1997).

"I learned to sing," he says. "I had the time. The words for the songs came from everywhere: headlines from the newspapers; my personal experiences with women and men; my time with Milford Graves; my memories of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Mohammed Ali, Amiri Baraka, Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown; the things they said they were going to change; the things that haven't changed that much. After three years they gave me a horn. When they moved me to Strasbourg I had a saxophone in there. When I went to Metz they had a horn there too. That was readaptation, they said, getting me ready to be released. I felt bitter towards the United States government, not so much the French administration. They were very good to me, worked everything out and got me out of jail."

Returning back to upstate New York to "get back on my feet", Doyle continued to work on *The Songbook*. When he finally recorded again, it was "at home, on a boombox. I couldn't afford no studio". The albums and singles that resulted from these home taping sessions are among the strangest and most compelling recordings of the late 20th century. Though comparisons might be drawn with the instant poetry of Captain Beefheart's "The Dust Blows Forward 'N' The Dust Blows Back", or the no-fi sound quality of Eugene Chadbourne's early cassette recordings, the works that come closest to Doyle's musical and linguistic universe are the early songs of Harry Partch. Like Partch's *Barstow* song cycle, which assembled its texts from cryptic and poignant graffiti left by desolate desert hitchhikers in the Depression era, Doyle's lyrics transcend the personal to become universal. Oblique references to family and friends are intercut with hoots, whoops and hollers that seem to derive as much from ancient Africa as from the doowop and R&B Doyle grew up with. His saxophone, flute and recorder are no longer distinct from the voice – they're instrumental manifestations of it. "You can't separate

the singing or the flute from the saxophone," insists Doyle, "you can't separate none of it. It all revolves around one instrument and that is me, myself."

The 1990s saw Doyle renewing old contacts, working with Rudolph Grey, Wilber Morris and Rashid Bakr, as well as making new ones, notably Sonic Youth's insatiable free jazz enthusiast Thurston Moore, who in 1992 released the one-sided LP *Arthur Doyle Plays More Alabama Feeling* on his Ecstatic Peace! label. In 1997 a Japanese promoter flew Doyle to Tokyo for a string of solo, duo and trio gigs. "They like me there," he enthuses. "They were selling copies of *Alabama Feeling* for \$200!" He played and recorded with bassist Barre Phillips, and did a duo concert with Keiji Haino, plus two dates with the elusive Takashi Mizutani, guitarist with the cult psychedelic group Les Rallizes Denudes. How did Doyle get on with the Japanese musicians?

"Mizutani didn't say too much. I didn't contact him myself. [Promoter] Jun Tanaka booked a place for two or three nights, and 200 people showed up. Mizutani was a strange kind of character. He just wanted to play music. But I got on well with Haino. We sat down before the concert and went through the melodies of the songs. Don't smoke in front of him, though! Don't bring any strange shit to Japan, they'll throw you in jail, man!" How did he manage to make himself heard over Haino's legendary wall of sound? "I just turned the microphone up loud," he deadpans.

In March 2000 Doyle returned to Paris. In typical style, he was spotted playing underground – literally – in the city's Metro system, before eventually teaming up with drummer Sunny Murray (the two had previously played together back in 1980) for a series of dates in Europe and a recording session for the Fractal label, which yielded the album *Dawn Of A New Vibration*. On his first studio session since *The Black Ark* 31 years earlier, Doyle sounds relaxed, even playful, throwing in quotations from hoary old chestnuts like "In A Persian Garden" and The Young Rascals' "Groovin'" (his original suggestion for the album title was *Bus Ride Home*).

Sunny Murray recalls: "I could tell he'd been playing with Milford. It took him some time to get used to playing with me." Studiously avoiding comparisons between Murray and Graves, Doyle describes both as geniuses. "I've played with some great drummers, man... Sunny, Milford, Muhammad Ali, Rashied Ali, Rashied Sinan, Tom Surgal. Playing with Sunny Murray is about as much rhythm and drive and feeling and emotion as you can get."

In a recent interview, Doyle was cornered into saying he doubted whether "white boys could play free jazz the way it ought to be played", referring to Jim Linton and Scott Rodzick, the partners on his trio album *A Prayer For Peace*. When questioned on this, he's quick to set the record straight. "I don't know why I said that! Rudolph Grey, Keiji Haino, Burton Greene, John Zorn, Tom Surgal, they can all play free jazz. And Jim and Scott are white boys! From North Carolina. White boys! Two more white boys who can play free jazz! It's just music, man."

Ever hopeful that something will turn up, be it new work or releases of live tapes, Doyle still intends to return to his *Songbook*.

"I'm trying to record all of them, hopefully, before I die. Record all of them. Those songs are everything I've lived. They're dedicated to my family. My family have given me so much and I have very little to give them in return."

Doyle is under no illusion as to the difficulty involved, but is determined to continue making his music, without compromise. "I love being underground, man. They get you into the mainstream, and it's not happening, trying to be commercial. That was part of the conspiracy in the 1970s against free jazz. Rashied Sinan, he just disappeared. Government and police fucking with musicians. They got people to go mainstream. I didn't want to play that, I wanted to play free jazz soul. Free jazz soul music is what I play. I'm happy underground. There's not much money, but I'm happy. And that's a victory: being happy." □ *A Prayer For Peace* is out now on Zugswang; Doyle and Sunny Murray's *Dawn Of A New Vibration* is available on Fractal

Charts

Logistic

Playlists from the outer limits

THE RULES.

1. Say Please
2. No Food No Drink No FMG
3. No Greasy Fingerprints

4. If it's busy, we may limit you to 4 items
5. We may require a deposit from new customers.
6. Put the records back in their bags. Properly.

Say Thank You.

Opening Time 6.30pm
Night

ES
SIDE DOOR

Rough Trade: Illustration courtesy Culture Rules

Rough Trade 15

Busdriver

Everybody's Stylin' 12" (Masemen)

John Oswald

Plunderphonics 69/96 (Seeland)

Soundhack

Black Label 12" (Hard Wax)

White Stripes

White Blood Cells (SFTRI)

Max Turner

Matchbox, Jump And Jeepbeats (Gagann)

Nora Dean/U Roy

Angie La La/Tom Drunk 7" (Treasure Isle)

Prefuse 73

Vocal Studies And Uprock Narratives (Warp/Thrill

Jockey)

00100

Feather Float (Birdman)

Lilliput/Kleenex

Complete Recordings (For Us/Kill Rock Stars)

Kid606

PS I Dub You (Force Labs)

Lucky Dragon

Fux Us 7" (English Muffin)

Dexter

Intruder 12" (Klaeon)

Fennesz

Endless Summer (Mego)

Echoboy

Turning On (Ester Bonkmann Remix) 12" (Mute)

Felix Kubin

Jet Lag Disco (A-Musik)

15 Gospel Scorchers

Rev Charlie Jackson

"Testimony Of Rev Charlie Jackson" from *Louisiana Gospel Dynamite* (Curlew)

Mississippi Fred McDowell

"Jesus Is On The Mainline" from *I Do Not Play No Rock 'N' Roll* (Capitol)

Blind Willie Johnson

"If I Had My Way I'd Tear The Building Down" from *Praise God I'm Satisfied* (Yazoo)

Rev AW Nix

"Black Diamond Express To Hell Pt 1" from *Complete Recorded Works Pt 1* (Document)

Washington Phillips

"I Am Born To Preach The Gospel" from *I Am Born To Preach The Gospel* (Yazoo)

Rev Utah Smith

"I Want Two Wings" from *Slide Guitar Gospel* (Document)

Arizona Dranes

"He Shall Wear A Golden Crown" from *Arizona Dranes 1926-29* (Document)

Blind Mamie Forehand

"Honey In The Rock" from *In The Spirit No 1* (Origin Jazz Library)

Mother McCollum

"Jesus Is My Air-O-Plane" from *In The Spirit No 2* (Origin Jazz Library)

Blind Roosevelt Graves & Brother

"Woke Up This Morning (With My Mind On Jesus)" from *Complete Recorded Works 1929-1936* (Document)

Bukka White

"I Am In The Heavenly Way" from *Shake 'Em On Down* (Catfish)

Rev Edward Clayborn

"This Time Another Year (You May Be Gone)" from *American Primitive Vol 1* (Revenant)

Sister OM Terrell

"I Want You To Lead Me On" from *Bottleneck Guitar Masterpieces* (Yazoo)

Brother Willie Eason

"I Want To Live So God Can Use Me" from *Guitar Evangelists 1928-51* (Document)

Black Ace

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Morning Lake Forever (Glitterhouse)

Four Tet

Pause (Domino)

Susumu Yokota

Gnning Cat (Leaf)

Quantic

The 5th Exotic (Tru Thoughts)

Felix Jay/Byron Wallen

Cornerstone (Loop Guru Remix) (Hermetic)

Guided By Voices

Isolation Drills (TVT)

Coldcut

Re Volution (Ninja Tune)

Prefuse 73

Vocal Studies And Uprock Narratives (Warp)

The Lithium Project

Passo Fundo (Hydrogen Dukebox)

James 'Blood' Ulmer

Blue Blood (Innerhythmic)

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Bodily Functions (Studio K?)

cLOUDDEAD

cLOUDDEAD (Big Dada)

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Appliance

Imperial Metric (Mute)

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Spring Heel Jack/The Blue Series Continuum

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Rafael Toral

Violence Of Discovery And Calm Of Acceptance (Touch)

Spaceheads & Max Eastley

The Time Of The Ancient Astronaut (Bip-Hop)

David Axelrod

David Axelrod (Mo' Wax)

Various

Afro-Rock Volume One (Kona)

Koji Asano

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Pelt

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Axel Dörner & Kevin Drumm (Erstwhile)

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This month's selected CDs, albums and singles



On *Masses*, Spring Heel Jack construct matrices for top-flight improvisors that owe more to Harrison Birtwistle than Hackney Hardcore, says Tony Herrington

SPRING HEEL JACK/ THE BLUE SERIES CONTINUUM

MASSES

THIRSTY EAR TH1570103 CD

Masses is an utterly unexpected, and utterly gripping, collaboration between the East London duo Spring Heel Jack and a group of top-flight improvisors, drawn largely from New York's ascendant free jazz network but also including Evan Parker and microtonal violinist Matt Maneri. Nominally, the record is part of the American Thirsty Ear label's avant jazz Blue Series, which explains that credit to The Blue Series Continuum. The series is A&Red by pianist Matthew Shipp, and it has already issued good to great records by Shipp, Maneri, bassist William Parker and saxophonist Tim Berne. But Masses is something else. As the SHJ duo John Coxon and Ashley Wales, the record's producers, put it: "We reversed what you expect to hear... We unbalanced everything."

With their "Lee Perry HV" 12" and *There Are Strings* album, Coxon and Wales helped formulate new dimensions in breakbeat science. They were both released in 1995, the same year as A Guy Called Gerald's *Black Secret Technology*, Goldie's *Timeless*, Photek's *Water Margin*, Dillinja's *The Angels Fell*, Droppin' Science's *Safari Sounds* and Luke Vibert's *Plug #1*. In retrospect, it was the moment the breakbeat matrix reached critical mass, imploding with the size and complexity of rogue data uploaded, hacker-style, by those and other amazing records. Spring Heel Jack seem to have spent the intervening years in a vaguely defined hinterland far from Jungle's hypertensive arenas. They have disappeared off the map for long periods, re-emerging to work through discreet collaborative projects that re-connected with Wales's past life as a member of Spiritualized, bringing them into virtual contact with the works of Tortoise, William S Burroughs, Thurston Moore and

mutantrumpeter Ben Neill. There are no breakbeats on *Masses*; in fact there are hardly any 'rhythms' at all, at least in the conventional sense. Instead, Coxon and Wales have constructed a series of skeletal, flexible platforms for improvisation that owe more to Harrison Birtwistle than Hackney Hardcore.

If there are precedents for this very particular mix, in which studio-processed audio environments are played back in real time as the triggers for, and fixed components in, a series of group improvisations, they feel few and far between. George Russell's 1967 *Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature*, Bob Ostertag's *Say No More* project, and some of Evan Parker's explorations in the realm of synergetic electroacoustics provide three possible and very different models. But as Matthew Shipp points out, *Masses* "creates its own space and time".

Little of what occurs could be predicted. On the opening "Chorale", Coxon and Wales boot up the hard drive to terraform a toxic wasteland defined by plumes of feedback, shifting scree slopes populated by mysterious life. Given such a context you might expect the 21st century improvisor to respond with a lexicon of unfathomable glyphs and rebus tracings. Instead, a trio of Shipp, William Parker and trumpeter Roy Campbell abstract a jazz ballad that triggers abstruse emotions like a Paul Bley solo. Similarly, on the title track, a full band fanfare worthy of The Peter Brötzmann Octet circa *Machine Gun* comes out of nowhere to devastate the atmosphere created by a pointillist soundworld straight out of John Cage. The second track, "Chiaroscuro", is all drama. It begins with a loop of the strings of a double bass being struck rhythmically with a bow, the fourth beat of each bar accented with a single handclap. Saxophonist Daniel Carter builds a long tenor solo full of burnished melodic shapes that writhe ecstatic through the upper registers. The intensity spirals as William Parker and

drummer Guillermo E Brown divide and multiply the countrhythms to strafe the loop track, and Matt Maneri's electric viola overloads the mix with microtonal orchestrations that split the sky like a Keiji Haino improvisation.

"Salt" deploys live bass and drums and processed organ surges to generate the kind of kinetic texture-pulse patented by Cecil Taylor's groups. Evan Parker's soprano solo is a strobe-lit flicker film in which tiny note values are played with such speed they stack up and become superimposed in a complex paralanguage. On "Red Worm", over a taped guitar part that rings and clangs through a hazy tonal centre, Parker's soprano unfolds legato swirls that knot into micronote-clusters high above the deep trenches carved out by Tim Berne's baritone.

"Cross" and "Coda" sound like versions of the same piece; either way, they contain the most amazing music here. Like all the tracks, they begin as electroacoustic laminates and evolve extra layers over the course of the performance. On "Cross", the backing track contains an arco bassline recorded in London by George Trebar and processed into a solarised mood machine by Coxon and Wales. Playing a muted trumpet, Roy Campbell blows a lonesome melody that fissures and cracks as his tone splits to match Maneri's violin screaming under the rake of the bow. On "Coda", the baleful mood created by a synthesized chord sequence is capsized as Campbell gabbles and moans through the trumpet, and Maneri slides into the preternatural tunings and frequencies of microtonality – what his father, saxophonist Joe Maneri, refers to as the Virtual Pitch Continuum.

More so than Evan Parker's recent meeting with Jah Wobble on *Passage To Hades*, *Masses* opens a tunnel on a space where matter and anti-matter can co-exist without the vernacular power of either state being compromised or diminished. It is a total triumph. □

DAVID AXELROD

DAVID AXELROD

MO'WAX MWR141 CD/LP

BY CLIVE BELL

Like an old friend whose name you can't recall, the bass on David Axelrod's new album sounds eerily familiar. It turns out to be Carol Kaye, who played the crucial bassline on The Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations". Her distinctive 60s plunk is all over this album, along with Earl Palmer's gloriously slouching drums and the gritty guitar of the late Howard Roberts. So how to explain the presence of these giants of 60s LA recording studios on a brand new record? The legend that is David Axelrod spent the 60s at Capitol Records, producing hits for singer Lou Rawls and saxophonist Cannonball Adderley. Two albums by The Electric Prunes were followed by solo tributes to William Blake. The jazzy soulfulness of this work has been plundered by Lauryn Hill, Dr Dre and DJ Shadow. Nowadays, if your house gets burgled by celebrities, your name will make the papers. So it is that Axelrod is ripe for a comeback album.

The odd result is a clutch of 32 year old rhythm tracks, originally intended for a third Electric Prunes LP, over which Axelrod has layered stodgy orchestral arrangements, sax solos, a choir and a sardonic rap from Angelino Ras Kass. Axelrod, now in his late sixties, is not a perfectionist in the Randy Newman mould, and some of the playing is dodgy intonation wise. Neither is he completely Hollywood dotty, which might have produced an unhinged freakout album. The opening and closing songs combine sincerity with a complete lack of interest, and the instrumental arrangements fall between stools, neither mad nor unspeakably hip. Musically, there's a tendency to overstate, roaring when a snarl would do. However those old rhythm tracks are undeniably the business, and sadly the less Axelrod fleshes them out, the better they work, meaning tracks five to eight of this 36 minute album are pretty damn fine. It's not quite the magically hip artefact that Mo'Wax presumably wanted, but maybe they should have got Money Mark to fool around with the material instead.

BANG ON A CAN

LOST OBJECTS

TELDEC NEW LINE 8573841072 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Village Voice writer Kyle Gann diagnoses 'The Gap', between composer and audience, as the "defining neurosis" of 20th century classical music. Minimalists and post-minimalists have affirmed an axiom from the previous century, that composers should look for common ground with nonspecialist listeners. It's a view taken seriously by Julia Wolfe, David Lang and Michael Gordon, composers and leaders of Bang On A Can. They even claim they're "too funky for the academy and too structured for the club scene". Well, they've sure got a degree in pretentiousness, which is reinforced by the description of their latest project, a kind of baroque oratorio: "Lost Objects is a prayer hall, a hymn but also an invention. There is a narrative, somewhat sacred, but it is a fractured meditation. There are traditional elements of the oratorio form, a choir [RIAS-Kammerchor].. as well as a Baroque orchestra [Concerto Köln].. mixed with the electric guitar, electric bass, keyboard and drums of rock music", claims librettist Deborah Artman,

in her overblown sleeve note.

The "fractured meditation" is about lost objects, from the trivial to the profound – inspired by the Talmudic rules about obligations when these are found. "I Lost A Sock" is the opening track, and the 'oratorio' addresses loss of the ability to understand speech, "Acoustic Aphasia", loss of one's heart and loss of one's life. It's a typical example of Bang's loud minimalist style, mixed with operatic precursors such as John Adams's Nixon In China and even traces of Carl Orff's Carmina Burana.

Also AWOL are modesty and a sense of humour, because if nothing else this is certainly a po-faced exercise. Musically it's pretty unendurable. The nadir is "Fw:Fw:Please Look", with its laboured chord changes. Loud, large and vacant, Bang On A Can confirm the truism that empty vessels make the most noise.

BOHJASS

AN EX IN PM TORT

BOHJASS NO NUMBER CD

BY BEN WATSON

Composition nowadays is so often a bummer – more about taming and managing sound than unleashing it – that it's tempting to adopt improvisor fundamentalism and dismiss any music not invented in real time. Then along comes saxophonist, guitarist and composer Tim Pledger and his group Bohjass, and you're reminded that aching melodies and haunting harmonies can be written down, and that a score can still be a launchpad for aural poetics.

Bohjass are a Melbourne-based sextet who banner themselves "trance music meets jazz", with mentions of "rhythmic minimalism" and "free jazz". If that sounds like Man Jumping or Icebreaker, that's because Bohjass's advertising isn't as astute as Pledger's composing. In the hands of Steve Reich and Philip Glass, minimalism became a repressive sublime, where repetition achieved a relentless, chic finesse unbesmirched by traces of human emotion. Pledger favours sleek, repetitive riffs, but his sinister, minor scale keys and asymmetrical metres are worlds away from classical minimalism, creating an absurdist feel as the musicians focus on the task. The unison melodies and expressive solos of the opening "God Gorgeous: An Exercise In Post-Modern Torture" stand out against the crazy flow of the rhythm section like inner thoughts against rush hour traffic.

Pledger's harmonies are so pungent they make you blush, and his tunes breathe, puffing themselves up and deflating in humorous mimicry of biological necessities. Michael Portley's drumming is clinically precise when necessary, but also capable of intimate thumps and 'out' extrapolations during the free sections. Ali Watts takes fiendish electric bass parts in his stride. When flute, trumpet, guitar and the leader's sax take off in different directions, it resembles early electronic music by Arne Nordheim, all birdsong and fireworks.

The usual distinctions between tradition and invention can't plot Bohjass. Maybe what's most admirable is Pledger's emotional investment in his melodies, his very unpostmodern absence of formalist justification. If you like Bobby Hutcherson's Total Eclipse, Egg's The Polite Force and Frank Zappa's The Grand Wazoo, but didn't think such harmonic hypnosis and linear

exfoliation could survive the bubbling scintillations of House and rave, try Bohjass.

CHICAGO UNDERGROUND QUARTET

CHICAGO UNDERGROUND QUARTET

THRILL JOCKEY THRILL093 CD

BY MIKE BARNES

Considering the exposure given to the kaleidoscopic Chicago scene in which they operate, exactly how underground are Rob Mazurek's variously configured CU units? But it's easy to be blasé about music that in the bigger picture is still a minority interest. Few Chicagoans will be sauntering along the sidewalk whistling the opening "Tunnel Chrome" – not that they'd find it difficult, if they were so inclined. There are no major freeform fistfights here, no fucked-up electronica or journeys to the outer limits of tonality. What you get are shortish, poised, melodic pieces, punctuated with fiery outbursts and splintered breakdowns.

Cornettist Mazurek and drummer and percussionist Chad Taylor are the core Chicago Underground Duo (and occasionally trio). Taylor's other activities include collaborations with AACM founder Fred Anderson and indie man-about-town Sam Prekop, while Mazurek's CV includes stints with Isotope 217 and HIM. Making up the numbers here are Tortoise guitarist Jeff Parker, also involved with AACM and Isotope 217, and bass player Noel Kupersmith, of Brokeback.

No surprise, then, that the bass and guitar arpeggios of Mazurek's "Tunnel Chrome", etched with Taylor's brushwork and chiming vibes, recalls Tortoise. The interludes are filled in by guitar and electronically treated cornet flurries that sound weirdly like guitar solos. On Parker's brief "Four In The Evening", Taylor's brushes play against a wandering bass, surmounted by a poised guitar and cornet theme – like a cool jazz 'head' played once with no further need of embellishment. Taylor's "A Re-Occurring Dream" strolls out on a walking bass part, connecting with currents of high register cornet and Parker's angular, distorted guitar. Kupersmith's "Wo Ist Der Kuchen, Meine Frau" opens with cascading vibes and rhythmic correspondences, its sparse melody developing into a repetitive refrain.

The water gets choppy on the ensemble improvisations of "Nostalgia" and "Welcome", with Parker's playing taking on an acerbic, Sonny Sharrock-like attack. In truth there is nothing startlingly new here, but CUQ have a strong sense of identity. Their playing is superb throughout and producer John McEntire splendidly enhances their performances.

COMPANY

COMPANY 5

INCUS 41 CD

COMPANY

EPIPHANIES

INCUS 42/43 2XCD

BAILEY/DAVIES/FELL/GAINES/WASTELL

COMPANY IN MARSEILLE

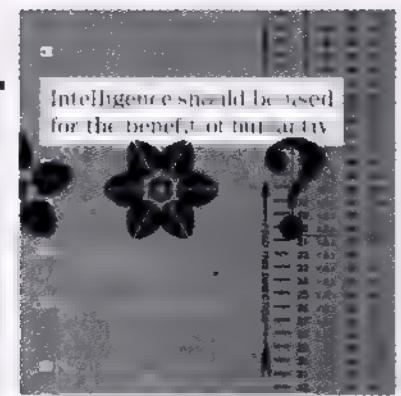
INCUS 44/45 2XCD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Improvisation has been defined as "the exploration of occasion". Derek Bailey's Company events, initiated in 1976, take shape through temporary alignments of musicians with widely

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Soundcheck



A hitherto unreleased New York live set partially confirms the existence of a third great Miles quintet, argues Bill Shoemaker

MILES DAVIS

LIVE AT THE FILLMORE EAST

7 MARCH 1970: IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME

COLUMBIA AC2K 85191 2XCD

A few jazz pundits argue that Miles Davis had not two, but three great quintets – the third being his so-called 'lost quintet' of 1969-70 with Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette. With no official recordings existing prior to the release of this newly discovered Fillmore East set, those pundits were woefully low on evidence to substantiate their case. Indeed, Davis biographer Jack Chambers, sleeve-note writer James Isaacs and others, are at odds on crucial counts about their history, generally, and this Fillmore East gig in particular. Now the appearance of this double CD, containing two non-stop sets, significantly changes the composite picture of Davis's activities between the core 1969 *Bitches Brew* sessions and *Miles At Fillmore*, recorded in June 1970. As it happens, Davis led a sextet that March weekend – Isaacs lamely relegates the vibrant percussion of Airto Moreira to mere technicality status to press his argument – but even so, *Live At The Fillmore East* gives the quixotic 'three great quintets' position some credibility.

Spanning "Masqualero" and "Willie Nelson", it confirms DeJohnette's assertion that Davis's ensemble was a lot "more avant garde than people were ready to admit". The rock and funk elements of "Spanish Key" and "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down", as well as the post-bop contours of Shorter's "Masqualero" and Joe Zawinul's "Directions", are continuously stretched in multiple directions by Corea's heavily chromatic, ring-

modulated flurries, DeJohnette's splayed cross-rhythms, and Holland's scurrying figures. Responding to the resulting turbulence, Davis mixes divebombing long tones, machine-gun spurts and raking scalar runs, while Shorter, particularly on tenor, opts for a swirl of cyclical phrases and offsetting lyricism, punctuated by menacing growls and bloodcurdling screams. Regardless of any subsequent sins, it must be said that Shorter is as compelling here as on such advanced jazz classics as his *The All Seeing Eye* and Anthony Williams's *Spring*. Even on the version of "Bitches Brew", one of the few instances when the heat is lowered, the tranquil gurgles and murmurs of the original are replaced with a stark approach to colour and texture.

Recorded a month before the release of *Bitches Brew*, *Live At The Fillmore East* further testifies to Davis's itchy restlessness. And, seeing how he had recorded some of his most languid, spacey tracks just a few weeks before this gig, the documentary evidence here supports the idea that he pursued divergent paths in concert and in the studio. Finally, it argues that Miles took a decidedly more circuitous route to *On The Corner* than is often suggested, one where the urgency of advanced jazz improvisation held sway longer and more securely than commonly believed. Certainly, on this night, sources ranging from Philly Joe Jones to 20th century piano literature were far hotter in the mix than Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone. And the palpable presence of Shorter provided a continuity with the music of the mid-60s that should not be underestimated. At the same time, by virtue of it being Shorter's last gig with Davis, this recording can be considered the prologue to

the saxophonist's tenure with Weather Report.

In an interview with Dan Morgenstern in 1970 Davis refuted the idea that his Fillmore quintet (or sextet) was a rock group, and *Live At The Fillmore East* backs him up. Presumably shelved for such relatively minor technical deficiencies as high-end distortion and muddy stereo imaging, it is possibly the best example of how the innovations of Davis's mid-60s acoustic quintet informed his subsequent electric music.

If *Live At The Fillmore East* lays the foundation for a fairly strong case, however, this recording alone is not enough to canonise the group that made it. Much of the credit goes to Davis himself, who transposed the tape-constructed swell and ebb of *Bitches Brew* to the concert setting. The relatively open ended set structure gives Corea and Holland a much freer reign than on their initial studio sessions with Davis (which will be revealed in full on the forthcoming *The Complete In A Silent Way Sessions*). Additionally, Corea and Holland's rapport with Tony Williams sounded tepid on *In A Silent Way*, compared to their work with DeJohnette here. On the Fillmore date, DeJohnette simultaneously jackhammers the beat, layers contrasting patterns, and comments on the solos and Moreira's asides. Yet despite the integral contributions of Corea, Holland and DeJohnette, additional evidence showing how they provided exactly what Davis needed at about this time – just as Red Garland/Paul Chambers/Joe Jones and Herbie Hancock/Ron Carter/Tony Williams had done previously – needs to be unearthed before this Fillmore unit acquire the legendary status of the two quintets that preceded them. □

differing histories who nevertheless share an exploratory temperament. As convenor, Bailey ensures that each occasion has its own character, with disparate players acting, reacting and interacting to keep set formulas at bay.

Company 5 was recorded in 1977 during the concert series at London's ICA that also produced *Company 6 & 7* (INCUS 07). Though Steve Beresford, Han Bennink and Lol Coxhill are on that recording, they're missing from this one, which is correspondingly short on ironic humour. However, wild card cellist Tristan Honsinger is energetically present, steering straight even as he whirls around the implacable bass of Martin Van Regteren Altena and Bailey's guitar, which assumes the role of gelling agent for these especially strong voices.

Its character defined by the long opening track, *Company 5*'s test probes are launched from the jazz-tinged fringes of free playing. Steve Lacy, Anthony Braxton and Evan Parker mesh their various horns, with frequent upper register chattering and occasional squabbling. Another American visitor, Leo Smith, adds dignified and self-possessed trumpet, plus touches of flute. Four shorter pieces complete the album. Two Lacy-Braxton duets display advanced intuition of form. Braxton is incisive, Lacy insistent. When they coincide, sparks fly. Braxton also figures in two trios with Honsinger and Parker. On the first Parker, on muscular tenor, is like a bear fending off hornets. Honsinger responds with strenuous bowing and idiosyncratic muttering; Braxton ranges acidly among his horns.

In drawing up the *Company* roster, Bailey takes pains to avoid programmes where like simply attracts like. Issuing invitations for *Company Week* 1982, again at the ICA, he sensed that things had become "just a little cosy" and consciously sought musicians to open out the music in unpredictable ways. Filled with extraordinary sounds, *Epiphanies* documents this fabulous gathering. Two pianists feature: Keith Tippett grafts unique voicings onto jazz roots, and classicist Ursula Oppens temporarily relinquishes her scores for an improvising adventure. Composer/harpist Anne Le Baron, and composer/trombonist George Lewis add their extended techniques. Fred Frith, from the outer reaches of rock, keeps his electric guitar as distinct as possible from Bailey's own by placing it flat upon a table top amid other sounding objects. Julie Tippett adds acoustic guitar, flute and supple vocals. And the academically trained Phil Wachsmann, on violin and electronics, reveals a remarkable ear for group improvisation.

From Japan, Moto Yoshizawa is a marvellously imaginative bassist, and enigmatic sound artist Akio Suzuki contributes on his homemade instruments. Live, the underdemonstrative Suzuki drew the eye as well as the ear, a self-contained promise of the unusual. He struck the delicate tubes of a glass harmonica or stroked them with wet hands to produce beautiful, unearthly sounds. Among his other creations was the analopos, an echo instrument formed from a pair of open-ended cylinders joined by a spring, activated by vocalising into one of the cylinders or by plucking the spring — riveting to watch, extraordinary to hear. *Epiphanies* offers a small sampling of his beguiling soundworld.

The single long piece making up the first disc of *Epiphanies* features all the musicians in the

auditory equivalent of a tidal rockpool where surprising creatures engage in inexplicable activity. The second disc dips into the pool and scrutinises the interplay of small groups of a kind never heard elsewhere, such as Oppens paired with Yoshizawa or a quintet featuring both Japanese musicians with Bailey, Lewis and Frith.

Company 5 and Epiphanies have previously been available on vinyl. The new release *Company In Marseille* confirms the continuing validity of Bailey's hospitable concept. Less elaborately conceived for a meeting over two nights in January 1999, it brings together Bailey, the IST trio and veteran tapdancer Will Gaines, who was born in Baltimore in 1928. He became a bebop tap dancer and member of Cab Calloway's Cotton Club Show, working later with musicians extending from Sonny Stitt to Eartha Kitt, Stan Tracey to Sammy Davis Jr. Such openness matches Bailey's own resistance to enclosure. IST are bassist Simon Fell, cellist Mark Wastell and harpist Rhodri Davies. They fuse nervy improvising energy with chamber music intricacy on the opening trio track. Various combinations follow, including a substantial quintet piece from each night. Gaines duets with both Bailey and Fell, demonstrating his readiness to fracture pattern and shuffle time. An Incus video already documents a Bailey-Gaines performance; without the visual dimension, it's possible to concentrate exclusively on the musicality of Gaines's impromptu choreography. Feet become as important as hands in improvised music.

Fell, Wastell and Davies obviously know one another's playing very well. Their encounter with the older men is tight and attentive, offering small confidences rather than sweeping statements. Across the years since *Company 5*, Bailey himself is instantly recognisable without resorting to quoting himself, adaptable as ever to very different occasions.

PAUL DUTTON MOUTH PIECES

OHM/AVATAR OHM/AVTRT021 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Paul Dutton's gargantuan vocalising has been heard in recent times with improvising collective CCMC, a group in which Plunderphonics guru John Oswald reverts to alto saxophonics and avant garde film maker Michael Snow shows himself a considerable free jazz pianist. Dutton's own credentials reveal a heavyweight outsider. From 1970 until 1988 he was a member of Canadian high energy performance poetry quartet The Four Horsemen, along with bp Nicol, Steve McCaffery and Rafael Barreto-Rivera.

Their collective approach was to reject all forms of technological intervention, relying upon the direct physical impact of their utterances and bodily postures. Dutton dedicates one track on *Mouth Pieces* to England's premier practitioner, Bob Cobbing, and another to the innovative concrete poet Henri Chopin. Other than the recording itself, Dutton still shuns technological scaffolding; this is an album of 'solo soundsinging', his naked voice, unadorned. What remains is an extraordinary repertoire of emissions from lips, nose, buccal cavity, throat, chest and abdomen. Grunts and snorts, squelches and rattling, overtones that hum and buzz, braying, moaning, whimpering, whining, susurations, hesitations and growls. All captured

by the caring folk at Avatar Sound Art in Québec with a higher level of fidelity than has usually been the case with such recordings.

The word piece "Jazzstory" unfolds with a free associational momentum that brings Don Van Vliet's teeming verbal improvisations to mind. Another splendidly gaga piece bears the aptly descriptive title "Beyond Doo-Wop, Or How I Came To Realise That Hank Williams Is Avant Garde". Elsewhere he pays tribute to blues artists Robert Johnson and Blind Willie Johnson. Anyone interested in what the voice can do when pushed will find Dutton's performances fascinating, inventive, grippingly obsessive and often funny.

STEVEN FELD

RAINFOREST SOUNDWALKS:
AMBIANCES OF BOSAVI, PAPUA
NEW GUINEA
EARTH EAR EE1082 CD

BOSAVI

RAINFOREST MUSIC FROM
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS SFW40487 3XCD +
BOOK

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

For the past 25 years, ethnographer Steven Feld has returned repeatedly to a section of rainforest just north of a collapsed volcano on the highlands of Papua New Guinea. The inhabitants of the region adopted the volcano's name, Bosavi, to identify themselves, their language and the environment to which they are intrinsically connected. Feld was initially interested in one of its tribes, the Kaluli, whose songs mimic and often inspire weeping. From his explorations of this unique songform, at once intensely personal and social, he began a lifelong investigation of the Bosavi people and their creative impulses. In the sleeve notes for his first album of Kaluli recordings, 1981's *Music Of Oceania: Weeping And Song*, he noted that "the interplay of natural, animal and human soundmaking is a central feature of everyday Kaluli experience and the ability to make, respond to and interpret sounds a primary imperative for social competence". 20 years later, he has assembled *Bosavi*, a three disc set compiling his observations of this interplay.

The first disc contains a recent development in Bosavi music, the emergence of guitar groups in the rainforest. The music has obvious kinship with other Pacific island folk sounds, and not simply because ukulele is frequently added to the line-up; if Gabby Pahinui and The Sons Of Hawaii were to learn the Doc Watson songbook, they could integrate with the Creole bluegrass of Bosavi guitar ensembles. As with folk music elsewhere, domestic strife and regret often inform the lyrics. However, groups such as the Kemuli string band graft the traditional weeping song onto their modern song templates. And do you know any other folk group that allows for occasional solos by local butcherbirds?

The second disc surveys the sounds and songs of everyday life, and contains episodes of the Bosavi singing while gardening, building a bridge or bathing at a waterfall. A duet between a Bosavi vocalist and a wall of cicada chatter is worth the price of the entire set. Feld devotes the third disc to the initial focus of his study, the ceremonial weeping song. The waves of interlocking voices, testifying with distraught melody, are awe inspiring in and of themselves,

Tresor.

Various Artists

Tresor Compilation Vol. II
CD/Do-EP 56174-2/6 Tresor:174



feat. exclusive tracks by Matthew Herbert, Cristian Vogel, The Advent, Surgeon, Neil Landstrum, Daniel Bell, Sean T., Dave Tarrida, u.v.a.

James Ruskin

Into Submission
CD/Do-EP 56173-2/6 Tresor:173



Savvas Yatidis

Select
CD/Do-EP 56171-2/6 Tresor:171



Singles

Fumiya Tanaka

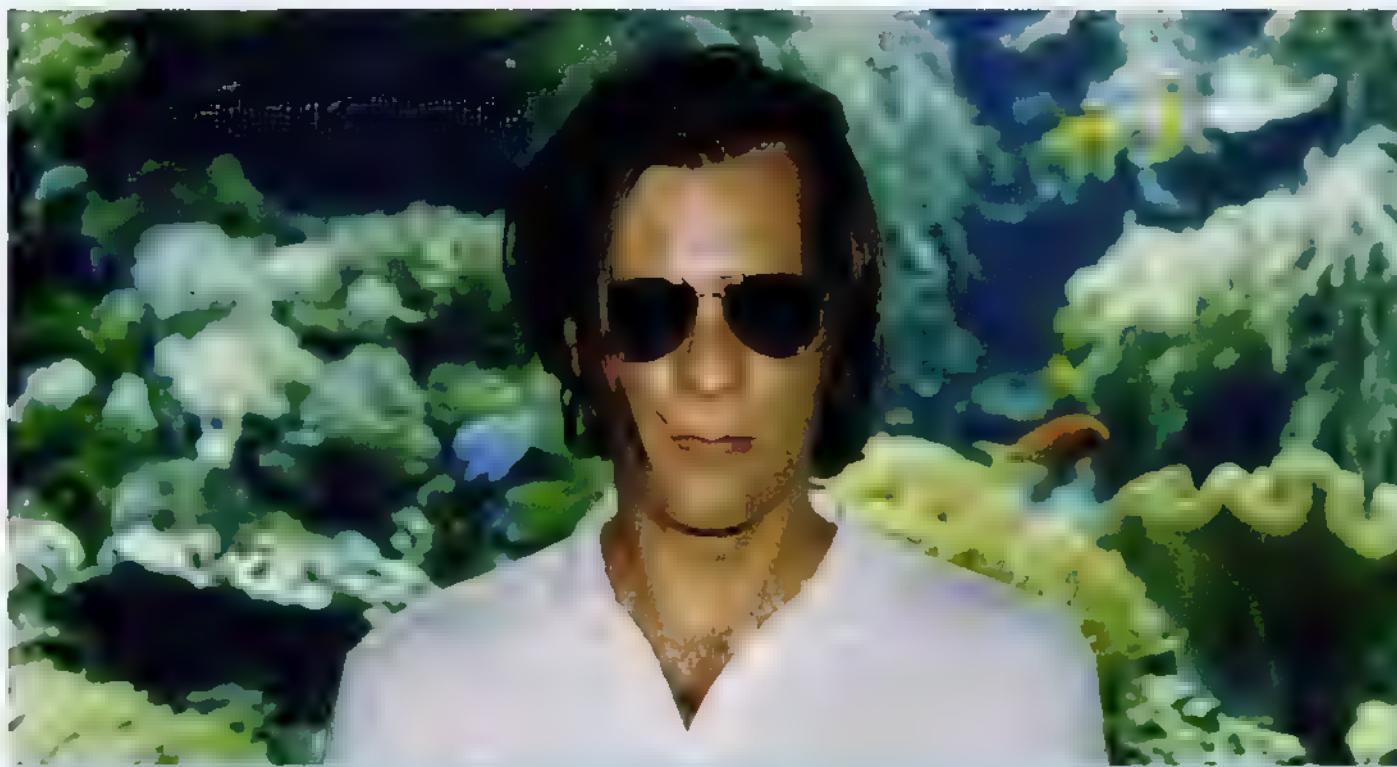
Drive EP
MS 56169-6 Tresor:169

Ben Sims

Dubs 2
MS 56172-6 Tresor:172



UK distribution by SRD



David Toop observes Austrian beachcomber Fennesz screening poignant scenes of the sun setting on The Beach Boys

FENNESZ

ENDLESS SUMMER

MEGO 035 CD

One topic we don't hear too much about in songs from equatorial Africa, or the central Australian desert, is the endless summer. Endless summer is a peculiarly American invention, indelibly associated with the 1960s, and subsequently borrowed by countries with a variable climate and economic privilege. It's a theme explored with varying degrees of intelligence in films such as Bruce Brown's global pursuit of the perfect wave called *The Endless Summer*, and John Milius's surf picture *Big Wednesday*, or any Beach Boys song that wrestles with the melancholy burden of loss and transition.

Should you be tempted to dismiss this as pretentious twaddle, I draw your attention to the Brian Wilson and Mike Love composition, "The Warmth Of The Sun", written just hours after John F Kennedy was assassinated, its lyric a dreamy, ecstatic exploration of natural cycles in nature and human love. It was Mike Love who dreamed up the title *Endless Summer*, for a 1974 compilation of past hits that rescued The Beach Boys from a sharp downward spiral, and this potent encapsulation of attenuated nostalgia was reprised many times in the group's long decline, whether "Keeping The Summer Alive" or the tragically euphemistic *Endless [dis]Harmony*.

Such impossible, almost alchemical, yearnings have given deadly poignancy to a ruined fairy story that is central to popular music and its myths. What on earth does this have to do with Fennesz, a leading exponent of Viennese digital transmutation? One of the answers to that question might be Jesus And Mary Chain, similarly engaged in quite another era by the Sisyphean task of burying Brian Wilson's piano in the legendary sandpit without totally obscuring its radiance.

Fennesz was, and is, a guitarist, and just as Jesus And Mary Chain explored an ambivalent relationship to pleasure, offering cyclical surf chords to a sacrificial Glaswegian kiss of fuzz pedals and overdriven loudspeakers, so Fennesz sprays atmospheric distress all over the screen of his paradise longing. As formulas, or procedures, or processes go, it's painfully

effective for addressing the emotional (and cultural, and geographical, and ideological) distance that separates many of us from the music we truly love. No love is more poignant than that which is denied, or lost, or withdrawn, or otherwise unattainable.

No palm trees for ten kilometres — that appeared to be the artwork message of *Fennesz Plays*, his 1998 EP containing a 'cover' of the Brian Wilson/Tony Asher ballad from *Pet Sounds*, "Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)". This meditation on stillness and romance drowned itself rather beautifully in a confusion of emotions. Trace memories of its source were picked apart with fastidious care to leave a web of trace memories hanging in electrolysed air.

That track, in particular, was a hard act to follow: ravishing sonic texture, vertiginous emotional implications, a Pop Art instrumental apparently aware that this strategy of the Pop Art instrumental, so central to 21st century music on the broken edges of dancefloor, jazz dive and conservatoire, was a move that Brian Wilson had more or less invented with tracks like "Fall Breaks And Back To Winter" (the Woody Woodpecker Symphony that finally turned a few pages in the calendar).

To be honest, I don't find anything here to quite equal that moment, though the play on withheld sensuality, an ambiguity of intent and meaning, remains deeply engaging. Familiarity is adding its reductive presence, along with a slight suspicion that the process of shadowing a direct emotional response with technological masks may be just a little too easy to copy, to copy, to copy. Fine for Fennesz, who is seriously talented, but can his method sustain itself against the incontinent output of an idle bastard army which has credit to buy a G4 but insufficient application to resolve the challenges of non-hierarchical composition?

That's another question, and clearly not a problem of Fennesz's making. What he does is consistently interesting, intermittently gorgeous, clearly focused and distinctive, not just in relation to the increasingly indistinguishable oeuvre of Clicks + Cuts but within the timeframe of its own format. In other words, each track has a different feel, a different shape, a different colour. I particularly enjoy the crystallised, dark

surface of "Got To Move On", "Caecilia", which is a 'proper' song heard through troublesome earwax, and "A Year In A Minute", lacerated, noirish, fighting to find a way out of Twin Peaks. "Endless Summer" is a fluffed up beach towel of muffled bliss, filter sweeps and arrested time, as it should be, and "Shisheido" could feasibly soundtrack a sunset falling over the Cafe Del Mar, were it not for the anomalous tone bubbles that warp its dippy love treacle.

"Before I Go" is troublesome. Fennesz doesn't say as much (except in the mortal allusions of his title), but it's a fragment snipped from Brian Wilson's "Til I Die". Originally released on *Surf's Up* in 1971, an alternative, largely instrumental mix of this fatalistic, desperately sad yet optimistic song was released on bootlegs such as *Landlocked* (liner notes by Zozozoo Zadfrack Glutz), then released officially in 1998 as part of the *Endless Harmony* soundtrack album. This mix was made by the recording engineer, Stephen Desper, who failed to convince The Beach Boys that the glittering ocean of sound he had siphoned from Brian's multitrack was worthy of release. Some of us non-beach men appreciated it, however, and I'm sure Fennesz was one of them.

What I'm not so sure about is the stuttering meander of broken lines, a fat, thin, dotted, dashed and seemingly haphazard trail of semaphore glitches that this fragment is persuaded into becoming. It makes sense as the isolation of a microscopic sample, probed and tormented into forward motion, though Fennesz is more assured when dipping entire songs into a bath of sulphuric acid or, as with the final piece, "Happy Audio", looping and shading a happy crackle that reminds us of a far off time when Steve Reich was somebody you listened to with excitement.

"The beach itself has eroded over time, literally washing away," wrote Lena Lencek and Gideon Bosker in their book, *The Beach: The History Of Paradise On Earth*. This sense of the inexorable erosion of perfection, sweet dreams fading in the harsh light of mediated emotion, seems to me to be central to Fennesz, and when he arrests that dissipation, paradise momentarily out of focus as if video paused, the feeling is bittersweet. □

but learning that the recording was made a few feet from a corpse who had died minutes before, with the choral lament travelling from mourner to mourner around a longhouse interior, adds to the poignancy. These songs are transporting, majestic and otherworldly.

Bosavi Soundwalks serves both as a companion volume to the Smithsonian set and as a studio abetted nature study, with Feld attempting to recreate the forest's natural soundstage of unknowable depth and infinite surprise. By editing together several stereo pairs of forest recordings, Feld approximates the acoustic density of the New Guinea highlands. Implicit in the layers of bird and insect sound spread over the stereo panorama are the rhythms of the landscape, with animal movement adding pitchshifting Doppler effects to the proceedings. More than just a sound document of the forest primeval, Feld imparts the very humidity of the place with these layered recordings. He has created a singular memento of the environment that has obsessed his adult life, one that, sadly, he may outlive.

HANS FJELLESTAD RED SAUCE BABY

ACCRETIONS ALP019 CD

DONKEY SHOW

ACCRETIONS ALP020 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Fjellestad is evidently a restless spirit whose innate taste for musical risks drew added impetus from his studies with George Lewis at the University of California. As a keyboardist he has performed with the likes of pianist Muhal Richard Abrams and bassist Peter Kowald. More importantly, as a founder of San Diego's Trummerflora Collective, he is part of an active pool of younger improvisors and composers.

Red Sauce Baby doesn't allow you to settle. Refusing to behave itself, it screams, throws things and makes a mess. As Fjellestad says, "Keeping a stranglehold on it, imposing control, makes for lifeless music." Clearly a teasing "Gadfly Principle" is at work, to cite the title of the prepared piano improvisation that follows the two quirky collages opening the disc. On those, piano filters through taped street sounds; bagpipes play "Scotland The Brave" while a church organ broods, free jazz frenzy erupts from woodwinds and percussion, then subsides into a basketball game. Straighter instrumental combinations include two piano duets with Dana Reason, but elsewhere, electronics are drizzled across a text-sound composition in English and Danish, while stones click and an accordion, gourd pipe and trombone sound. It only hints at the flavour of Fjellestad's spicy concoction.

Donkey is Fjellestad's duo with guitarist Damon Holzborn. Show presents live recordings from San Diego and Los Angeles. Both players augment their main instruments with electronics to create scrawl and squall effects. Turntablist Marcus B joins the pair for one piece, and Matt Ingalls contributes clarinet and violin on two others. Whether its source is sampled voices, Fjellestad's synthesizer or Holzborn's acoustic guitar, the music assumes the quality of aural graffiti, jagged hints and smeared traces of illicit communication between members of some clandestine network, tags of the Trummerflora.

KEIJI HAINO

ABANDON ALL WORDS AT A STROKE, SO THAT PRAYER CAN COME SPILLING OUT

ALIEN8 ALIEN27 2XCD

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

Just when you thought that another intensely intimate double CD from the man in black might be that one set too many, Keiji Haino plunges deep into the swirling shadows to produce one of his most accomplished performances yet. Beautifully recorded and exquisitely packaged, it contains a disc each of electronic percussion and hurdy gurdy music. The latter is a perfectly balanced and delicately driven drone exercise, punctuated by Haino's mournful, monkish wail. Here traditional folk instrumentation is transformed into a psychedelic prayer wheel cranking out a meditative mix of mysticism and minimalism. In the tradition of La Monte Young's *Drift Studies* and the handful of recorded works by Taj Mahal Travellers, the piece throws a cloak of invisibility over the personality of the performer, leaving the music to take over as the one detectable dominant force.

Although this reviewer finds Haino's percussive pieces less rewarding than his hurdy gurdy drones and ecstatic guitar works, the 'electronic percussion' disc completing this set is an exceptionally fine example. Here, he comes over as a clattering, chattering poltergeist whose unearthly voice is wreathed in a flurry of feedback, metallic resonance and electronic exorcism. But whatever the instrumentation, every Haino performance reprises his odyssey of inner discovery. If sometimes he pushes hard without getting very far, on *Abandon All Words* Haino significantly advances along his path.

RUSSELL HASWELL

LIVE SALVAGE 1997 -> 2000

MEGO MEGO012 CD

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

The world of 'multi-disciplinary artist' Russell Haswell is one of extremes. Opening his debut CD of collected performance pieces, "06:52:51, 1999 Metro, Kyoto" immediately leaps out on the attack. A fearsome, skull shattering, flesh shredding display of electronic hostility, it sounds like feeding time at the shark tank, with Haswell shovelling everything at his disposal into the snapping maw of his own improvised great white.

Haswell has obviously been studiously following (and recording alongside) Masami Akita and other Japanese noise innovators such as Masonna and Incapacitants. He is also conversant with such doom rock units as Earth, Sunn))) and Electric Wizard, plus numerous Death Metal groups, whose influences he has somehow incorporated into these intricate, highly detailed sound pieces. Yet he has his own distinctive voice and, although it would be easy to dismiss him as post-Merzbow, the new energy surging through them refuses to be shut down. His ability to incorporate the atmosphere of his environment is also on show here. "07:53:60, 1998, 121 London" (taken from his performance at a squat in Brixton, as part of a Japanese noise evening called Societic Death Slaughter) is a grainy field recording where the closeted clamour of the audience becomes an integral part of the piece. Equally atmospheric is "02:00:30, 1998, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London", from John Peel's Meltdown, where he

participated in a Japanese noise session with Merzbow and CCCC, among others. Haswell's recording sucks in the howling echo of the venue, together with the underground adrenaline rush of the entire show, and blows it back out in chunks. What this collection finally proves, however, is that noise, like other forms of musical expression, cannot be confined or attributed to any one single country or state. It's a world thing, and *Live Salvage* successfully demands a place on its stage.

ISKRA 1903

FRANKFURT 1991

EMANEM 4051 CD

BY BEN WATSON

Iskra 1903 was a trio founded by trombonist Paul Rutherford in 1971. A line-up with guitarist Derek Bailey and bassist Barry Guy lasted for three years. From 1977 to 1995, the trio replaced Bailey with violinist Philipp Wachsmann. This concert was recorded by saxophonist Rüdiger Carl in Frankfurt am Main on 1 October 1991, and it's easy to see why it demanded to be released. The music has the helter skelter velocity and syncopation of musicians who are utterly on the case, and the analogue recording is brilliantly clean and powerful.

Unlike many doyens of extended technique, Paul Rutherford isn't embarrassed by the straight-ahead sound of his trombone, and his clean lustrous notes are beautiful. The 33 minute opener begins with a compressed motif that could derive equally from bebop or 12 tone. All three musicians are aggressively articulate. Guy uses amplification less for volume than to extend his sonic palette, and his scything and abrasions have a powerful effect, causing the others to dig deep into their resources. Wachsmann is also amplified, though he preserves the quaint, hurt sound of violins associated with Berg and Webern. Bailey's rhythmic pressure made *Iskra 1903* explosive and knotty; on occasions, Wachsmann introduces a Viennese nostalgia which offsets more active stretches.

The second set sandwiches lengthy solo outings between trios. Even so, it's Rutherford's group, and his aesthetic dominates. He's a volatile and nervy player, not so much rejecting the various legacies which inform his ear — JJ Johnson's suave ease, Bach's modulating logic, Wagner's sonic density — as citing them in order to turn them into question marks. He's astonishingly quick in responding to the others. With an instrument as big as a trombone, it's a little like watching a tank turn pirouettes. By choosing string players who were using electricity to bring into audibility effects which are normally too quiet to hear, Rutherford infuses his purely acoustic sound production with urgent modernist impulses. There's lyricism and tenderness here, but continually under threat from a brutally urban sense of noise and speed.

It was in July 1903 that Lenin argued that keeping useless people on the editorial board of *Iskra* — the newspaper and collective propagandist, agitator and organiser of the revolutionary party — "out of pity and injured feelings" endangered the socialist movement. In doing so, he split the Social Democrats and laid the foundation for the Bolshevik Party. Rutherford's choice of name was apposite. This is free improvisation which is impatient with

3 FOR GIANT BORDERS

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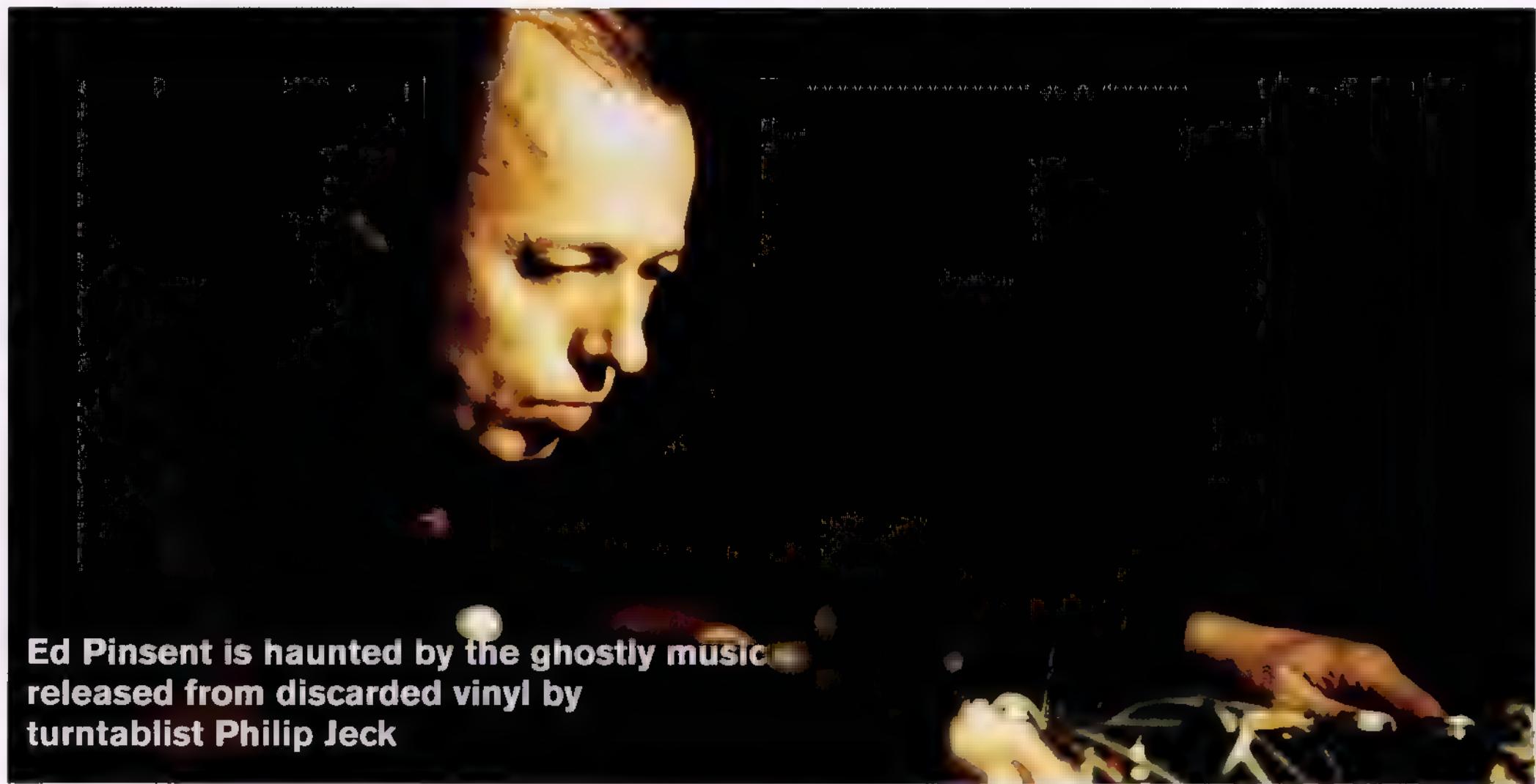
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Ed PinSENT is haunted by the ghostly music released from discarded vinyl by turntablist Philip Jeck

PHILIP JECK
VINYL CODA IV
INTERMEDIUM 008 CD

Another new work proclaiming 'the end of vinyl'? Not on your life. *Vinyl Coda IV* is a 45 minute continuous piece by UK sound artist Philip Jeck, recorded live in Munich and originally broadcast by German radio. It is an intensely powerful and mesmerising work. As is well known, Jeck works with old record players and a vast collection of battered vinyl remnants. He has been known to set 200 of them playing at once, letting random waves slowly build up into a compelling multi-coloured snowdrift. Despite the many indeterminate factors, *Vinyl Coda IV* is no hopeless muddle. Each accreted layer of sound opens a window into the next; it's like seeing multiple, superimposed images, on grainy Super 8 film.

It requires a significant amount of skill to work on such an ambitious scale, but we're not simply applauding a juggler spinning plates here. Jeck makes genuinely moving music, harnessing an extremely efficient source of energy very economically. "With looped records or looped tapes the rhythmic structure looks after itself," is how Jeck describes his method. "I listen to the sound and change the tone controls actually on the record players. And I really only use two effects – an old cheap reverb which goes wrong occasionally, and a guitar delay pedal. I just fiddle around with the controls until it sounds right."

Jeck began his turntable explorations in the early 1980s. He has developed into a gallery installation artist and a stage performer, recently touring Japan with other Touch and Ash International label artists. In 1993 he won a prize for *Vinyl Requiem*, an installation with Lol Sargent, with 180 Dansettes playing with 12 slide projectors and two movie projectors. His striking installation, *Off The Record*, which was included in the London Hayward Gallery's Sonic Boom exhibition last year, comprised rows of 72 old Dansettes and gramophones attached to a wall, and programmed like

automata to select and play old records at random. Jeck owns a large and cherished collection of old devices from the 1950s and 1960s, which are as much a part of the art as the records themselves.

Of course, Jeck isn't the first or only artist to transpose turntablism to arenas outside of DJ culture. In the UK, Project DARK called attention to the contrivance of a rotating circular object on a turntable, by replacing vinyl discs with ones made of wood, steel and other materials that fed signals of thick noise to the tonearm. Janek Schaefer released his eccentric *Wow* record and built a machine with three tonearms, aping earlier experiments by Boyd Rice, and emphasising flaws which recording engineers consider 'undesirable'. But we need artists who can transcend the mechanics, or the work remains merely 'interesting'. Listen to Seattle artist Jesse Paul Miller and his astonishing 'secret records' – that is, epoxy resin recasts of old vinyl with foreign bodies pressed into the moulds. The barely discernible noises he generates are chillingly effective, mysterious transmissions from the distant past.

Jeck achieves that same transfixing quality. He is more than a process artist, in that we hear the art and not the gimmick. I doubt if he even auditions any of his records, cueing them up to sample the 'best' bits. Rather, serendipity is the major contributing factor. Let the old machines malfunction as they may, and let the faults in the distressed vinyl surface contribute. It's as though the machines have a 'virtual memory' of how to behave. Factors normally considered to be faults – skipping, locked grooves, scratches, surface noise, tonearm skimming the surface like an ice-skater – are converted into strengths, growing into the body of the work. Jeck allows himself the most minimal of interpolations, using tape, glue or a knife to tamper with the surface of a record. Mostly, he sits back and listens, knowing instinctively when the time is right to add another layer, or another loop. His method involves considerable sympathy, seeing how he is

effectively nurturing the tired old record players, venerable 'parents' to the lost, orphaned records he has rescued from oblivion.

Jeck isn't interested in the source material as music, simply in records as sound generating artefacts. "It's similar to the way I'm working with sound: just textures and landscapes," he confirms. "You're not quite sure what they are and it doesn't matter." The content is nearly transparent. There is no postmodern juxtaposition of sounds for 'shock' effect, as with Otomo Yoshihide; no snickering at the banality of 'low' music, as with People Like Us; no concerted attempt to refashion old music into new, as with Christian Marclay. Jeck's work depends more on the two-way interaction with its audience. If we encounter something remotely familiar or resonant floating in his miasmic sea of sounds, then we are encouraged to transform it into music, with no added commentary, editorialising or ironic quotation marks supplied by the artist.

'Haunting' is an overused term, faced with music that leaves us lost for words. Yet it is utterly appropriate when talking about Jeck's work, music made up of the ghosts of musicians, the spectres that float off old vinyl like ectoplasm from the mouth of a spiritualist. Some of his Dansettes have cryptic messages chalked into their lids, replacing earlier messages which have been smeared away. Jeck reveals how modern culture is a palimpsest, each layer written on top of the old. He conjures up that feeling of ancientness. This record is another visit to the Necropolis of dead music, with Jeck playing Charon and ferrying us slowly across the Styx. But mercifully, the souls here are not doomed. Rather, Jeck finds a way to redeem them, liberate them from the Hell of being trapped in vinyl like an insect sealed in amber. He lets each voice join in a grand communion, a heavenly choir of records sounding and resounding in a thousand combinations of loops, speed changes, superimpositions and echoes. □

Soundcheck

There are no track titles, no sleeve notes, indeed no easy way in. But if *Ovalcommers* first appears forbiddingly monolithic, it soon becomes apparent that the salvaged snippets set in motion by Oval's system generate an astonishing amount of textural variation. One moment the dense bombardment brings to mind showers of sparks sent up by an angle grinder, the next, boiling waves of sound subside to expose something like the plaintive wheeze of an accordion. The serene sustain of Frippertronics guitars and the tremulous notes of vintage synths are also hinted at.

Its dynamic fluctuations could be described as wilful, but in fact they're the opposite. They're produced by removing – rather than imposing – the composer's usual, draconian, controlling intelligence. In this sense, the music recalls the aleatory, Cageian serendipity of a piece like *Variations IV*, where the chance interaction of a web of submerged triggers produces unexpected oases of space and purity in a sonic sandstorm.

By its end, Popp emerges from *Ovalcommers* as a very human (anti)composer. His quest to introduce interactivity in recorded sound springs from a genuine desire to liberate his listeners. As a result, however difficult it might appear on first hearing, his music is at once curiously involving and constantly inviting.

PERREY & KINGSLEY THE OUT SOUND FROM WAY IN! THE COMPLETE VANGUARD RECORDINGS

VANGUARD 3V184/86 3XCD

BY MARK SINKER

If schoolbook harmony and orthodox rhythm figures are the manacles of music, then Moog maestros Jean-Jacques Perrey and Gershon

Kingsley are now and then capable of a level of expressive constraint – not to say torment – to match *120 Days Of Sodom*. Who said that hell was a week's imprisonment in a Tex Avery cartoon? On *The Out Sound* (which collects *The In Sound From Way Out*, *Spotlight On The Moog*, and the two Perrey solo LPs *The Amazing New Electronic Pop Sound Of* and *Moog Indigo*, with a bonus CD of club remixes) the seamless novelty chirpiness of this, um, breakthrough 60s electronica gathers and gathers and gathers, to a monobloc pitch of unhinged gleeful nihilism.

Or is it just terrible, terrible music? If this collection hadn't thoughtfully included Fatboy Slim and Eurotrash struggling (on the bonus CD) to convert selected P&K into 'Today's Happenin' Mixes', well, yes, one could possibly just have mocked, dismissed and wandered elsewhere. But the boring mess the clubland modernisers make – and frankly better DJs would have only ever disguised the problem better, never solved it – is directly related to the sheer indestructibility (undeconstructability?) of the originals.

Heard en masse, the duo's lineage is reasonably clear: Spike Jones in the deep past, for manic comedy treatment of the, er, classics, via precision SFX slapstick; the surfwang era (from Duane Eddy to Joe Meek's Tornadoes) as a slightly prior klangfarbenmelodie project, where constellations and loops of sound texture are the grabby foreground, tunes and styles mere pretexts, and, as a goal perhaps glimpsed but obviously never reached, Ennio Morricone's plateau of soundtrack work. Morricone, of course, has many of the same roots, and on the first half of the second Perrey solo record, certain stylistic similarities are evident in the least relevant place: the melody. But Morricone's roots also included the Italian Improv avant garde and,

perhaps most basic and irreducibly romantic of all, the Western. Perrey and Kingsley cloaked their romantic seriousness of purpose (if any) in the deniable rhetoric of space alien strangeness/silliness. By the time of Perrey's *Moog Indigo*, half the cuts resemble nothing so much as the Mike Oldfield remake of the *Blue Peter* theme. Classical orchestrations aren't carefully reverent, Wendy Carlos-style – the odd duckquack still breaks in, but it feels more fond farewell to childish Spike Jonesish things than the dawn of proto-Zornist aggression – but the pisstake is aimed mainly at the easy target: square pop. Enter The Residents, with *Third Reich 'N' Roll*, to take up the slack.

So how DO you listen to it? Well, there is a strand which speaks directly to the material prescience of the technology itself: electronic blips as purveyors of Techno's rhythmic motorik; the arrival, 15 years early, during "The Third Man Theme", of an arcade game space battle. Where Futurist or punk nihilism was a response to a deep sense of promise betrayed, and can always therefore be put back in the sentimental box of dream deferred, the 'scare the squares' affirmative terrorism which grounds the 'best' of *The Out Sound From Way In* is something else again. Because its unstated promise is, I think, this: in the future, all music will be our music.

IGGY POP

BEAT 'EM UP

VIRGIN VUS200 CD

BY DAVID KEENAN

Two steps forward, six steps back – *Beat 'Em Up* fits perfectly into Iggy Pop's pattern of withdrawing just when he's on the verge of getting it on. 1999's *Avenue B* was a beat classic, its combination of spoken word and

minimal noir backing constituting a dignified and creative way of cutting himself free from the carnage of a career resembling a car crash. But, finding Iggy as confused as ever, *Beat 'Em Up* ranks alongside *New Values* and *Blah, Blah, Blah* as yet another missed opportunity.

Coming over like Iggy can't decide which balcony to play to, *Beat 'Em Up* attempts to please everyone. The opening "Mask" is all "TV Eye" thud; "Jerk" is college rock, and the title track is limp Metal. Add them together and you've got a desperate mess. Still, there are some entertaining moments, and Iggy's scabrous asides are often explosively funny. The aforementioned "Mask" is a rant about authenticity by a guy who plays stadiums in ripped jeans and a biker's jacket, running down all the subcultural types he despises before surrendering to an urge to simply lambast everybody in LA for "just plain licking ass"; "LOST" wittily recycles part of the chorus from Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"; but elsewhere his sorry sermonising is just plain embarrassing. You can tell he's floundering when he extends a 'life is like a football game' metaphor – "Everybody's trying to score" and so on, ad nauseam – across the endless choruses of "Football", thereby rendering one of the album's few musical highlights resolutely unlistenable.

EDDIE PRÉVOST TRIO

THE VIRTUE IN IF

MATCHLESS MRCD43 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

The improvising musician is caught between a rock and a hard place. Success is seemingly an unattainable goal because improvisation is not a closed system guaranteeing a result. Failure is

Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

Tony Conrad and Alexandria Gelencser's *Live Austin, TX 1999* (Mycophilic TOXIN021 10") inaugurates Beta-Lactam Ring's series of limited edition 10"s with a beautiful duet between Conrad's skyscraping violin and the deathdrones of Gelencser's cello. It's coupled with a new track, "Alas My Shrunken Head", from Edward Ka-Spel of The Legendary Pink Dots, which moves through little circling electronic fireworks to end with desolate piano. Volume Two presents composer Rick Reed's meditative *Music For The Rothko Chapel* (Mycophilic TOXIN022 10"), a long dronework split across two sides recalling some of Makoto Kawabata's more esoteric solo excursions; and Volume Three showcases the bleak electronica of Stimulus's *Programme Music* (Mycophilic TOXIN23 10"), which sounds like To Rococo Rot nodding out at the wheel.

Abunai are a Boston-based psychedelic combo whose *Deep Mu Flux + 2* (Camera Lucida CL003 10") is a pretty wonderful instrumental buzz through the various faces of midnight. This record probably won't appeal to those who found the spacier moments on the legendary 70s

Greasy Truckers Party comp (with Hawkwind, Man, etc) offputting, but those who cherish the shimmer of lysergic psych/Prog cusperity will blow some serious late night smoke to this. None of the tracks really go anywhere, but the paths they amble down have an exquisite aura.

Evil Moisture/Cock ESP's *Monsters Of Cock* (Sunship SUNFIFTEEN 5") is actually a co-release by 12 labels, but listing them all would be a waste of everyone's lifetime. Cock ESP are, of course, the pride of the Midwestern US noise/glam underground, Evil Moisture are a London-based unit of similar persuasion and pedigree. This 5" vinyl consists of 381 songs, which are actually short little snippets of various sound blaps, given distinct and sometimes excellent titles ("Rooster Boy", "Tokyo Sperm Bath", etc). The 'tracks' are not banded, however, they're just set apart by a second (or less) of silence, and allowed to crank across the disc like small tongueloads of warm spit.

Two recording outfits run by heads of labels sound none the worse for the nepotistic demonomania that led to Gang Wizard and Seaworthy's *Split* 7" (Black Bean And Placentia

BBPOTC191/Steady Cam SCAM9807 7"). Gang Wizard are up to their extremely high standard here – intercutting their weird take on British DIY action with US lo-fi instrumental scuzz. Seaworthy are equally good, making an odd kind of shimmer-pop garage music that references both UA-era Popol Vuh and Warm Jets Eno. Which, you have to admit, is a pretty nice trick.

More wonderful, folk-based drug madness from those redoubtable Finns, Kemialliset Ystavat, can be found on *Pieni Palatsi* (Vauva VAUVA01 7"). This self-released seven song EP features a variety of suggestions about how one ought to reconcile nature and noise, including deep forest strumming and tinkling, and syncretic form-wobbles worthy of The Godz. Easily one of the key releases of the new millennium for people who breathe with all their holes open.

There is precious little information included with Caspar Kneale's *Feather-Duster* (Celebrate Psi Phenomenon No Number 7"), but it is most likely a solo release by the four year old son of Campbell Kneale, the New Zealand artist best known for his work as Birchville Cat Motel. If so, this is the best 'youth recording' since Miles Innes tackled "Cum On Feel The Noize" on the *Miniatures* compilation. One side has sinewaves burbling through wisps of feedback and flute, like they were walking across Allen Ravenstine's

scalp. The other side is a rumination for guitar and violin almost worthy of mid-period Jandek. What on Earth does this lad eat for breakfast?

The way some people tell it, Lightning Bolt are the first combo to really move the spirit of No Wave forward since The Scissor Girls packed it in. And indeed, on this evidence, it could well be the case. *Conan/Behemoth/Into The Mist* (Load 029 7") was recorded at various venues, and the spasmodic collisions between quickly tapped drums, scabby guitar and pre-literate vocals have a very special charm, especially on "Conan". That said, there is never any question that this is ROCK music, and that's something performances of the original No Wave groups never made clear. So who knows where that leaves Lightning Bolt in terms of genre absolutism? But the record is still a fine, fierce thing.

Junior Soul's *Super Love* (Blood And Fire PK3 10") is a stone dub classic. Though Junior's reading of the title tune is undeniably classy, it is eclipsed by King Tubby's restrained but funky dub, where the flute of arranger Clive 'Azul' Hunt chops in and out of the mix. The flip features a Lloyd Charmers cover of another Curtis Mayfield tune "Darker Than Blue" with Tubby again taking care of the version. This 10" (a strictly limited edition, apparently, so move fast) prefaces a full album's worth of similar fare due up later in the summer. □ Reviewed by Steve Barker, Byron Coley and David Keenan

into the overall piece, gives their music both its expansive temporal quality and its afterlife.

In the vanguard of experimentation and under close scrutiny in the crucible of performance, one further quality is made manifest: honesty without pretence.

NEU!

NEU!
GRÖNLAND 724353078027 CD/LP

NEU!

NEU! 2
GRÖNLAND 724353078126 CD/LP

NEU!

NEU! 75
GRÖNLAND 724353078225 CD/LP

BY JOHN MULVEY

When trying to understand the enduring appeal of Neu!, it's perhaps easiest to think of their absurdity. Here is music made by two men predicated on the entirely quaint notion of a dual carriageway being futuristic which still sounds exciting. If the likes of "Hallogallo" and "Für Immer" are about anything, they're not about rock 'n' roll's familiar ideas of escape and speed and exotic destinations, they're about the idea of constant, even meaningless motion. The views are featureless, the steady pace unspectacular. Yet, imbued with some mysterious pull, you want them to last forever.

Had Michael Rother and Klaus Dinger filled all three of their albums as Neu! with nothing but microscopically evolving versions of "Hallogallo", it's possible their massive influence on contemporary music would be just as great. Listening to these beautifully remastered, inscrutably packaged CDs (bereft of new information), it's striking how the motorik beat (or 'Apache' beat, to placate Dinger) still sounds new and brave and utterly beautiful. Nearly 30 years of namedropping, notoriety and relentless plagiarism don't detract from this at all. In fact, the ubiquity of that charmed, undulating rhythm over the past decade has merely acted as an appetiser for these records, finally officially reissued to replace countless murky bootlegs. For the most part, they still move like a dream.

While the road anthems attract easy imitations and easier metaphors, Neu!'s less heralded music benefits most from the remastering. The proto-ambient grounds and angles of "Sonderangebot" (from Neu! 75) have a new clarity and depth, which make the abrupt skee introduced four minutes and 37 seconds into the track all the more alarming. Likewise, Michael Rother's fastidious detailing and every fading sigh of his vocal are now audible on his wave and piano meditation, "Leb Wohl" (Neu! 75).

By the same token, the true nature of the vanispeed manipulations of "Neuschnee" and "Super" that pad out Neu! 2 is reinforced: not as pranks or fearless experiments, but as the product of a desperate and joyless panic, the only time Neu!'s music became tainted by self-consciousness. If the idea, perpetuated by some, of Rother and Dinger sharing a joke over these shoddy 'remixes' is unfeasible, the idea of them sharing a joke over anything is even harder to envisage. Hence the 'divide and prosper' magnificence of Neu! 75, an album which remains a model of how dissenting groups should end their relationship. With Rother using side one to shape becalmed, weatherbeaten drift music and Dinger (with his brother Thomas and

Hans Lampe) filling the flip with his whooping, pummelling aggro-motorik, it's a rare example of an aesthetic concept perfectly divided into its two constituent parts. At the end, you want to root out albums by their subsequent groups – Rother's Harmonia and Dinger's La Düsseldorf – and switch repeatedly between them, if only to perpetuate the clash.

Dinger's late outbursts notwithstanding, the calm optimism of Neu! remains palpable. The cultural atmosphere of Germany in the early 70s, of a generation intent on forging an identity free from historical ties, obviously has some bearing here. But while it may explain the measured determination of these albums, it can't quite account for the confidence and poise of so much Neu! music. Even now, they seem an anachronism: a group that strove – from the moment they chose their name – for something fresh and better, and actually achieved it. An exclamation mark has rarely been more justified.

TOM NUNN

BURNING PALMS
GARUDA NO NUMBER CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Remember stereo demonstration LPs in the 1960s? What they sounded like was actually more important than what they contained, and there's a similar skewing of priorities here. Tom Nunn has been building his own instruments and improvising on them since the mid-70s. Not a man to jealously hold back their technical specifications, he informs listeners that his 'Octatonic T-Rodima' divides the scale into eight notes rather than the usual seven, and furthermore the instrument "is constructed from a three quarter inch birch plywood sheet with 33 threaded steel rods bent at 90 degree angles attached to the board in groups of 11...". There's more, but suffice it to say that no matter how impressive the hardware, his software isn't nearly good enough.

By inventing his own instruments Nunn puts himself in a grand American tradition. Comparisons with Cage's prepared piano pieces and the music of Harry Partch are unavoidable, yet Nunn's material feels flat and anonymous in such company. His melodies sound like jaunty, albeit slightly microtonal jingles. Elsewhere his use of electronic manipulation doesn't so much increase his expressive palette as merely rub awkwardly against the home-cooked, Heath Robinson twangs and clatters of his instruments. Pitching his electronics somewhere between 50s Stockhausen and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, he brings Doctor Who's Tardis in to land in the middle of "Mesentenc Field Extraction"; but the rest could have come from any university electroacoustic studio.

CECILIE ORE

CODEX TEMPORIS
AURORA A4989 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Since the 80s, Norwegian composer Cecilie Ore has talked of creating a "scraped", bare music. In his sleeve note, Richard Toop writes that her work gives him the vertiginous feeling of flying over unyielding expanses of Arctic tundra, say from Tokyo to Moscow. That's also the picture conjured by *Tapiola*, the late masterpiece by fellow Scandinavian Sibelius. But Ore's soundworld is an abrasive modernist one. Born

in Oslo in 1954, in 1988 she received the Norwegian State Guarantee Income for Artists. Though the idea of artist as public servant, on the German model, is questionable even on artistic grounds, it must be a factor in the vibrant musical life of this small country.

Codex Temporis, composed 1988-92, is a tetralogy, and all four Latin titles reflect a preoccupation with time. Two are for string quartet – the estimable Cikada Quartet – the others for chamber ensemble, here The Oslo Sinfonietta. On *Praesens Subitus* for string quartet, that sensation of flying over bare expanses is vividly present. The monochrome intensity of this driving music carries over to the instrumentally expanded *Erat Erit Est*. Elsewhere its compressed fury is at times veiled and muted, resulting from the restrained forces and generally low dynamic level. The effect is made shockingly vivid at the start of *Futurum Exactum*, for string ensemble, which sets the driving motion alongside violent, explosive episodes.

A distinctive feature is the use of amplified string quartet, pioneered by George Crumb on his Vietnam War protest, *Black Angels*. Though it overturns the classical model of live performance as overheard conversation, its effects are less dramatic in a recording. More distinctive is the structuring motif throughout – glissandos with fluttering trills so rapid they give the impression of reverb. Even the occasional pauses are taut with expectation of the next onslaught. *Codex Temporis* is a draining listening experience, but a marvellous one.

OVAL

OVALCOMMERS

THRILL JOCKEY/FORM AND FUNCTION
THRILL103/RTD17629322 CD/LP

BY CHRIS SHARP

It's almost a decade since Markus Popp first started to salvage the glitch, somehow conferring with its runty, random noises an unworldly poise and a creeping sense of otherness on the whimsical pop stylings of Oval's covered up first record – 1993's *Wohntont*, released and recently reissued by Der Plan's Ata Tak label. Shortly after Oval abandoned the song altogether for *Systemisch* and *94 Diskont*. On these albums, the glitch was emblematic of an attempt to break with the sterile linearity of CD sound. Popp hacked into the discs' shiny, seamless surfaces to mine their seams of data, chipping the tiny jewels of sonic purity from which Oval constructed music of beatific and pristine beauty. Sadly, these two peerless recordings ushered in a generation of laptop losers, entranced by Oval's sound, but mostly unmoved by the same impulse towards freedom. With last year's *Ovalprocess*, Popp went further, exploring the ability of generative music systems to remove the composer from the process, with the aim of eliminating the static reproducible CD altogether and replacing it with a stream of sound that could be modified by the user at will.

Ovalcommers is the next instalment in his exploration of systems composition. From the outset, the CD offers the sensation of watching plants grow in a flickerframe series of timelapse photographs. Tendrils of sound spring forth, gather and recede, a biomass flowering in lush profusion. And underpinning everything is the skipping, febrile, scratchy pulse of the glitch.



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Soundcheck

psychedelic speedfreak Asahito Nanjo – bass anchor of High Rise, Musica Transonic, etc – announces his return by carving an axe-size cavity into the cranium with half a riff lifted from a Motörhead B-side, the aptly titled "Over The Top". *Imaginative Plain* is Mainliner's fourth official album, discounting the usual mountain of CD-R releases on Nanjo's carelessly promiscuous La Musica label. It is without a doubt their most consistent and most gruelling blast of 'psychedelic solid free attack' since 1996's psych-damage debut *Mellow Out*. Acid Mothers Temple guitar guru Makoto Kawabata is still present, but former White Heaven bass player turned drummer Koji Shimura replaces Ruins' Tatsuya Yoshida, who graced the first three official Mainliner albums. Shimura's workman-like contribution here provides a more than adequate high octane thrust to Mainliner's blasted mass projection. The density of sound, which is never locatable to any one instrument, congeals into a grinding buzz of viscous static that leaves even Kawabata sounding as if he's freaking out in treacle. Yet when Nanjo's trademark staccato vocal bludgeons its way through the onslaught, as on "Soft Line", it's hard not to feel a slightly masochistic nostalgia for the first wave of the Japanese psychedelic underground that made its way to the Occident in the mid-90s. Even so, although Nanjo and co were integral to the process that forced rock back beyond the pain threshold, you can't escape the feeling that *Imaginative Plain* is wholly predicated upon former glories.

More seriously regressive are the atavistic throwbacks of Kawabata's latest power trio Nishinohon (West Japan). Here, with fellow Acid Mothers bassist Atsushi Tsuyama and drummer Yoshimitsu Ichiraku, Nishinohon unleash a tempestuous brew of monstrous riffs, wiggled out

guitar solos and piledriving rhythms that is best approached grinning. This is comicbook 'hard rock' in the 70s orthodox sense – a big, dumb excess that doesn't know when it's gone too far. Where The Acid Mothers evolve new uses for old clichés, in their Nishinohon guise Kawabata and co happily play them for real. Some titles rendered in a bizarre Scottish dialect urge caution, however. "Ah dinnae wan tae do owt, ba ah still wan momey" bursts into life with Tsuyama's hysterical primal roar, but loses momentum with its ill-judged chorus. "Hoos the fuk that et tha rest o man schoo?" showcases Kawabata's hitherto unheard Richie Blackmore impression; not to be outdone Tsuyama rips off an appalling Robert Plant impersonation on "Let's Zeppelin" – yes, it's as daft as it sounds. A balance between in-jokes and insanely OTT playing is struck on the Blue Cheer barrage of "Constitution Of The State Of Western Japan, Article 14". And if you're a sucker for excess, the 20 minutes of bootleg quality recordings nailed on to the double vinyl version are for you.

MAT MANERI

TRINITY

ECM 1719 CD

BY BILL SHOEMAKER

Perhaps more so than his previous recordings, this solo album reveals the influence of two of Mat Maneri's teachers, neither of whom are Joe Maneri. Certainly, Mat Maneri has his father's old soul, which looms much larger in the violinist's programme than the microtonal aesthetic pioneered by the saxophonist. Yet, important facets of his approach are attributable to two of his early teachers. The first was Robert Koff, a Baroque specialist who introduced him to the almost hornlike sound of that period's bowing

style. The other was bassist Miroslav Vitous, who helped Maneri negotiate the frequent conflicts between bowing technique and jazz phrasing.

Arguably, these early tutorials shaped more than just his technique. While Maneri generally does not employ the type of serpentine line commonly associated with Baroque music, his solos have procedural and structural similarities to the conventions of subject and answer, and of alternating expositions and episodes, found in Baroque fugue. This is particularly evident on the hallowed title track, where his improvisation catalyses three motifs, and on the autumnal adagio, "November 1st", where two separate voices emerge from the development of the initial materials.

Though Maneri occasionally displays flashes of gypsy lycism and, on his cover of John Coltrane's "Sun Ship", an affinity for South Asian music, his real gift is in conveying both the yearning quality that is almost universal in traditional string music, and an arch modernity, something Vitous has done masterfully at times since the early 70s. Interestingly, this duality is explicated most impressively on his take of his father Joe's "Lady Day's Lament", an excellent example of the unfolding melodic line and implied groove that are as integral to the saxophonist's music as microtonality. And, on this evidence, to Mat Maneri's as well.

MORPHOGENESIS

IN STREAMS VOLUME 2: 1997-2000 CONCERT AND STUDIO RECORDINGS

PARADIGM PD17 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

British Improv group Morphogenesis, now in their 16th year, run a tight ship. Confident in their

course of action, they have relied upon their collective strength, cohesion and integrity to sustain them in the face of audience hostility, such as occurred when they supported Sonic Youth at North London's Forum. The angry results are documented on this new Paradigm disc. Culled from live performances on familiar territory in London between 1997-2000, their particular blend of live electronics and communal improvisation generally suggest conciliation rather than confrontation. This is music of rapt intelligence, but it's not designed for an exclusively cerebral elite. These are performances of depth, charm and variation.

The six musicians – Adam Bohman, Ron Briefel, Clive Graham, Clive Hall, Michael Prime and Roger Sutherland – have diverse musical backgrounds ranging from the purely academic to the full gamut of improvisatory settings, with ensembles of pedigree such as The Scratch Orchestra and Nurse With Wound. The range of sounds produced both from conventional, albeit prepared instruments as well as customised ones, such as water machine, springs, and amplified found objects, would be fascinating enough without the added complexity of processing, filtering and manipulation. Morphogenesis's microcosmic soundworld is instantly recognisable and thoroughly coherent.

Generating music from conventional and non-musical materials gives rise to overwhelming timbral and textural variations. The provocative nature of their output is also an essential ingredient. Sound is moulded like fine clay, and the resulting artefact is then deliberately fragmented, only to be rebuilt into a new form from the recognisable shards. The use of remote, ambient noises (the weather, the city), captured and manipulated in real time to be integrated

The Compiler

New compilations, reviewed, rated reviled

Serious Afro-funk scholars may be led astray by the cover of the fantastic *Afro-Rock* (Kona KONA001 CD), but they shouldn't mind too much. The cover is an outrageous still of the almighty Kenyan funk troupe Air Fiesta Matata taken from a television performance in 1970, but Matata aren't included on this otherwise superlative collection of heavy, heavy funk and Afrobeat. Thankfully, Matata's lead singer Steele Beattah is, and his "Africa" is like Dr John the Night Tripper performing incantations in a daishiki and polyester bellbottoms. If that ain't rare enough for ya, how about Zairois Dackin Dackino's previously unreleased 12 minute Afrobeat epic, "Yuda"; it may be pro-Mobutu, but at least it takes its subject's name to heart, and is an all powerful track which, because of its endurance and inflexible will to win, goes from conquest to conquest, leaving nothing but fire in its wake. Don't even get me started on Jingo's "Fever", Super Mambo 69's "Sweeper Soul" or Boko Band's "Onukpa Shawapo", just buy it.

It may finally have a festival in its honour in the Motor City, but only a real die hard wouldn't admit that Detroit Techno's moment is long gone.

All Access To Detroit's Music Festivals (Planet E PE65264 CD) is a round-up of 'The Renaissance City' scene compiled by ousted Detroit Electronic Music Festival creative director Carl Craig. On this evidence the phoenix won't be rising from its ashes any time soon. Techno is allegedly obsessed with the future, but the stagnant, retrograde, back-patting bohemianism on show here won't win it any new converts. Similarly, Germany's Techno stalwarts, Tresor, are stuck in the same old jack groove on *Compilation Vol 9* (Tresor 174 CD). Matthew Herbert, Cristian Vogel and Daniel Bell manage to use a new texture or two, but the rest is pretty predictable.

In the lands of its birth and ultimate success, punst Techno may largely be a figment of Carl Craig and Derrick May's imagination these days. But in Eastern Europe, Techno is still rebel music, like Laibach and Vinko Globokar stuck in a grain silo with only a sequencer for company.

Teknika 1 (Nika THX001 CD) collects the leading lights of the Slovenian scene, and while it's hardly the future Techno's godfathers promised way back when, it might keep the faithful from pulling out the same old Claude Young records

for a couple of days. Mostly, this concentrates on the harder, more minimal side of things, with Maysian synth pads for occasional hints of celestial grandeur. Unfortunately, most of the political charge comes from the context rather than the music itself.

Featuring classic tracks from legends like Oum Kalthoum, Fand Elatrache, Abdel Halim Hafez, Mohamed Abdelwahab and Asmahan, *Cairo Road* (Nascente NS080 CD) is a fine primer for newcomers to the slightly astnngent splendour of Egyptian music. Rather than merely loitering around Cairo's tape vendors, however, this album ventures right across the Maghreb and the Arabian peninsula to trace the influence of Egypt's nightingales on artists like Syrian Sabah Fakhri, Iraqi Nazem El Ghazali and Sudan's great Abdel Gadir Salim.

Despite its apalling title, *Asian Takeaways* (Normal 038 CD) is actually a rather wonderful bit of kitschy fun. Collecting singers (mostly women) from Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, Japan and Malaysia getting into the dohyo and grappling with the red, white and blue menace in the form of boogie-woogie, Duane Eddy, Peggy Lee, Perez Prado, Preston Epps, Patti Page and The Beatles, *Asian Takeaways* is a comp for people who find even the most absurd RD Burman film theme a bit too po-faced.

Reggae: I Am King – Classics From The Rockers Era (Ocho OCHO010 CD/LP) is

ostensibly a straightforward selection from a late 70s Notting Hill jukebox, but in today's context it looks like Ocho have taken a leaf out of the Soul Jazz marketing dept's handbook called 'Taking Reggae To The Masses'. The rather obvious marketing conceit doesn't diminish what is a supenor primer for the reggae novice. Alongside old chestnuts like "Police And Thieves" and "Uptown Top Ranking", lesser known tunes such as Black Harmony's "Love Marcus" and Me & You's lilting lover's rocker "You Never Know What You've Got" are given a rare airing.

Relay is part of the annual Stoke Newington Midsummer Street Festival. Over the course of three hours, musicians wander between four performance spaces, each with its own character. The number of participants in each spot is kept constant, so as one player arrives another leaves. The spirit of last summer's event is distilled into 22 audio snapshots on *Relay Eight* (2:13 MUSIC011 CD). The 17 members of this mobile, freely improvising community include singer Phil Minton, saxophonist John Butcher, trombonist Gail Brand, harpist Rhodri Davies, Pat Thomas on keyboards and Phil Durrant performing live electronic manipulation. The chatter of onlookers and conversation within the groups produce an atmosphere of loose informality studded with nodes of concentrated activity. □ Reviewed by Steve Barker, Julian Cowley and Peter Shapiro

decorum and tradition: it wants the musical moment now.

Free improvisation of this calibre strips music naked, making the intelligence and energy of active playing the only guarantee of continuity. When it works, as here, it's as near to the pure essence of musicality you're likely to hear.

KID606

PS YOU LOVE ME

MILLE PLATEAUX MP101 CD

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

If the remix is born from B-sides, a dance institution borrowed from Jamaican dub culture, the remix album (as distinct from archival compilations of B-sides, or showcase compilations of remixes by single producers) is slightly beside the point. Aside from market opportunity, what's the motivating factor for the almost obligatory remix treatment, aside from the Everest-like rationale, because it's there?

There are notable exceptions. 1998's *Reich Remixed*, however disappointingly executed, attempted to reacquaint the father of minimalism with his bastard children. Tortoise's 1995 *Rhythms, Resolutions And Clusters* extended the collaborative nature of their enterprise and announced their advocacy of a remix aesthetic at that time rare within rock of any stripe. The rationale behind *PS You Love Me*, a revisit of 2000's *PS I Love You*, isn't nearly as clear. Which isn't to say that it isn't a lovely album, merely that its purpose is as fuzzy as the tufted textures of its best and most beautiful moments.

With Kid606 complementing the eight remixes here with four new tracks, the album's underlying logic becomes even less clear. Expanding in the direction of *PS I Love You*, "Act Your Age" opens the album with a tentative, pingponging ambience, like a Chain Reaction track with the bass and percussion sucked out, a remarkable exercise in economy. Applying their own nouveau concrète methods to "Twirl", Matmos bring things back to earth with the addition of in-studio dialogue between themselves, the Kid and a photographer, working the shutter clicks and the mosquito whine of recharging flashbulbs seamlessly into the track. It's an appropriate treatment for an artist with a hyperactive attraction to the spotlight, even as it transcends the mundanity of the press junkets it evokes.

Atom™ chops "Whereweleftoff" into a light-footed number, skipping Garage accents dancing circles round the 'fried circuit board' squawks that Atom™'s Uwe Schmidt used on his own Geeez 'N' Gosh record. Out of this sexy chirping, Farben's "Kabuki Rock Mix" of "Sometimes" emerges almost unnoticeably, fogging the sound field with Jan Jelinek's characteristic moire, its airy House rhythm seemingly untethered by a downbeat. Rechenzentrum, Electric Company, Posterboys Of The Apocalypse and Twerk all turn in convincing variations on the same basic blueprint, grafting Kid606's grainy textures onto their own rhythmic signature; but it's Pan-American's "Unleft" that stands out: over a rushing stream of clicks and gurgles, a melancholy melody flaps in the breeze like a forgotten pennant over a blasted battlefield.

Kid606 closes out the album with "Goodbye", a luscious reprise of the acoustic unravelling on "Twirl"; it sounds like the Kid and John Fahey on ice skates, cutting graceful curlicues beneath

steely skies. As a gorgeous reminder of the value of play for play's sake, it's all the justification this particular remix album requires.

JANET KLEIN & HER PARLOR BOYS

PARADISE WOBBLE

COEUR DE JEANETTE NO NUMBER CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Janet Klein, the "enchanting ukulele chanteuse", is a highly popular live act in her home town of Los Angeles. Her Parlor Boys include two members of Robert Crumb's Cheap Suit Serenaders, and together they perform a wide range of "obscure, naughty and lovely songs" from the 1920s and 30s. "We play this stuff as if it were illegal," says Klein. Far from being an ironic revisionist, she freshens up the songs as if written yesterday, and offers them up glowing with an erotic brio held elegantly in check.

Klein inhabits this strange world totally and with obvious delight, a world in which an angry woman sings, "Real estate papa, you ain't gonna subdivide me", and Cole Porter's tantalising physician refuses to commit — "He said my epidermis was darling, but he never said he loved me". "I'm No Angel", one of the better known numbers, magically combines Klein's sexy phrasing and a hilarious band arrangement. The whole album oozes wit, sex and fine musicianship in a winning combination.

Producer Robert Loveless — of California ethnocore groups Savage Republic and 17 Pygmies — has gone to some trouble to recreate Old School recording techniques. A four song sequence with an expanded group was recorded in the Ross Deluxe Room, Hollywood, where some of Klein's favourite records were made in 1927. Robert Armstrong's Hawaiian steel guitar is magnificent throughout, but there are many moments where an authentic 20s sound surprises the ear. George Edwards's bizarre drum kit, Paul Shelasky's slippery, muted violin, Klein's own parlour piano, saw and virtuoso whistling and Randy Woltz's skeletal xylophone on "Tain't No Sin To Take Off Your Skin And Dance Around In Your Bones" (this last is also covered by Tom Waits and William S Burroughs in *The Black Rider*). Enough charm to wobble the birds out of the trees.

CAROLINE KRAABEL & VERRYAN WESTON

FIVE SHADOWS

EMANEM 4048 CD

BY ED PINSENT

Five Shadows... ghosts of recordings rescued from the live arena. Isn't there the danger that recording improvised music will drain its life, leaving only a shadow on the tape? Hear this vital music, and such ideological dilemmas vanish. These five shadows are alive: intimate jazz-Improvis workouts, recorded at concerts from 1999 and 2000. As a duo, Verryan Weston and Caroline Kraabel opt for the delicate gesture, rather than the grand slam blowout. They can play beautifully slow, melancholic music in which the natural acoustics of each venue are exploited, contributing to the haunting moods. Kraabel is an expat American living in London; her alto sax style is warm and personal, yet virtually opaque. No show off, she resists adding fancy 'effects'. Sax notes simultaneously mingle with her own voice, in tiny sighs, gasps, growls

and songlike trills. Weston, an English veteran whose relatively low profile is belied by his superb playing, contributes taut and detailed piano phrases with sharpness and utter confidence. He uses the high register like hi-hat percussion, while his fortissimo low register chords add rich colours and depth.

The duo have an instant, in-sync telepathy. Each player leaves respectful space for the other. They can pause for breath while working, and without stopping they will start to blueprint a 'diagram' for the next ten minutes of invention. They don't edit out 'mistakes' like laptoppers. They weave them directly into the music, in real time, so they are no longer mistakes. We are being spoken to, honestly and directly. The clarity of this recording is matched by the simplicity of Emanem boss Martin Davidson's sleeve. It's another topnotch entry in his catalogue of UK Improv.

KRISTIAN, SHALABI & ST-ONGE

KRISTIAN, SHALABI & ST-ONGE

ALIEN8 ALIEN28 CD

BY MIKE BARNES

This Canadian trio is comprised of Montréal-based improvisor Sam Shalabi on guitar and oud, double bass player Alexandre St-Onge (who has worked with the guitarist in Shalabi Effect) and David Kristian, who has collaborated with musicians as diverse as Autechre, Pan Sonic, Pole and Keiji Haino, as well as recording drum 'n' bass and sound design for films. On this occasion he eschews cutting edge gear in favour of a vintage EMS synthesizer.

Here, his synth infiltrates the elongated croaks, drones and groans of the bass and Shalabi's bowed guitar. These trailing tendrils of sound lead to bass flurries on the second part of "Little Feck", concluding with a loop of synth notes — pointillist blips against Shalabi's gestural, insectoid guitar scrapings. On "Tinkle Reptile", throaty basslines are accompanied by fragments of oud and the synth buzzing on the periphery. This could be free improvisation, electroacoustic music or analogue sound design, or maybe a combination of all three.

The periodicity of activity on "Insistant Falls" [sic] finds Kristian's electronics rotating into the soundfield and then disappearing, leaving a huge space before returning. The EMS synthesizer (pioneered by Pere Ubu's Allen Ravenstine) produces rather unpredictable, largely untempered sound effects, which makes it the perfect instrument for this context. The clicks, pulses and oscillations backgrounded at the start of "My Name Is Lemuel" build up against faunal calls from the others before drifting into a solo passage which reminds us that this instrument can also produce some of the most hideous sounds imaginable. At times gruelling, but fascinating overall.

MAINLINER

IMAGINATIVE PLAIN

PSF PSFD125 CD

NISHINIHON

NISHINIHON

GYUUNE GSAN101 CD

STATIC CARAVAN STATICRESONANCE3 LP

BY STEPHEN ROBINSON

After an uncharacteristic, somewhat unnerving, period of inactivity, Tokyo's most notorious

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likely a more inevitable and perversely tolerable condition. Yet it's necessary to at least strive for a resultant catharsis in performance. Eddie Prévost makes a virtue of such a conundrum. Success and failure are relative terms of no importance in the final analysis. Only the right to make the attempt is sacrosanct. Based on this premise, Prévost's latest offering is nothing short of total vindication.

The mystical construction of the trio is well served here. The format is the essence of true democratic engagement: three voices held in suspension, self-supporting and with the best chance of providing access to the egalitarian musical grail. Prévost's trio is well attuned to the possibility. In his wonderful sleeve notes (one of the most succinct descriptions of the improvisor I have read), Prévost suggests that a similar triad of forces is at work concerning the musician's engagement with his instrument: an advanced concern with its sonic properties, an interest in its inherent properties and a curiosity about its potential. Look no further for proof of three exponents of their art, going about their business with undisputed improvisatory acumen.

Tom Chant's chattering soprano saxophone produces delicate, articulate phrases. He clucks like a protective mother hen, becomes tetchy like an uncomfortable baby and whistles like wind over the heath. These similes are relevant because his playing is inherently animate, organic rather than mechanical. He recalls early Braxton, say, or Sam Rivers in his extended blowing: originality without a hint of verbosity.

John Edwards's double bass playing is highly sympathetic to the collective cause. His full, round sound is solidly rooted and yet able to respond to Chant's flights of fancy with pulsating throbs or delicate arco shimmers. What of the fastidious Prévost? Playing of this calibre is rare and to be savoured. Each and every point of percussive contact is weighed, balanced and selected intuitively. You would not expect anything less from a man who has pursued his art over a lifetime.

Space is not at a premium in this collective conversation. Delicate and precise ideas are allowed room to develop unforced. The probing vocabulary reveals a genuine desire to break new ground. As Prévost says, "A creative response is an active rather than passive condition." Walking it like he talks it, the possibilities of his particular 'if' are boundless.

THE RESIDENTS

ICKY FLIX

EURO RALPH 025 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

If you could only see me now listening to the new Residents CD wearing my Residents sweatshirt, drinking from my Residents mug and gazing at my Residents poster collection... Clearly, The Cryptic Corporation takes its merchandising seriously. And all to promote a group of white-gloved, tuxedo-clad, top-hatted eyeballs. Ah, conceptual art.

Before the musical invitation, *Meet The Residents*, was issued in 1974, movies occupied the attention of those eyeballs. A 17 minute excerpt from their early video project, *Vileness Fats*, is being issued on an *Icky Flix* DVD, together with films made for MTV in 1981, videos from the Museum Of Modern Art's

permanent collection, and animations made initially for CD-ROM issue. On the current CD, The Residents present a selection of new arrangements conceived and recorded for that DVD, including the soundtrack for *Vileness Fats*. If you buy the DVD you can luxuriate in a Surround 5.1 mix; the CD offers plain old stereo. In musical terms there are no revelations here. But then it's a long time since The Residents made any really significant disclosures. The tried and tested repertoire of voices is back: Sesame Street anthropoids, the confiding Bayou drawl and some incongruously lovely female singing. Needless to say, "The Third Reich 'N' Roll" puts in an appearance. The early compositions did achieve something unheard before in terms of studio composition and genre-crunching juxtapositions. Nowadays The Residents perpetuate a style.

Dedicated followers will want the reconstructed *Vileness Fats* music, a glimpse of the group shaping its own take on absurdist music theatre back in 1972. For me, the highlight is "The Gingerbread Man", with its Ennio Morricone opening, munchkin gamelan, sitar halo and full cast of voices hovering over electronic deeps.

THE SPACE BETWEEN WITH BARRE PHILLIPS

THE SPACE BETWEEN WITH BARRE PHILLIPS

482 MUSIC 4821007 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

The Space Between is Philip Gelb (shakuhachi), Pauline Oliveros (accordion) and Dana Reason (piano). Barre Phillips might be a guest, but the veteran bassist is a pivotal presence. The label's Website refers to the date as 'free Improv', which shows what a broad approach to making music the term encompasses. This isn't free Improv of the European kind that developed out of jazz – though Phillips comes from that background. In this instance, it arises more from contemporary composition, and especially minimalism, as Pauline Oliveros's presence implies.

This isn't the first time on disc that The Space Between have featured an additional improvisor from the jazz tradition: saxophonist Jon Raskin from The ROVA Quartet appeared on *between/waves*, released under Philip Gelb's name on Sparkling Beatnik in 1999. If anything, the results here are even more memorable. It's clear from the lively opening track, "King Kong Passes Through The Gates Of Shaolin Temple And Contemplates Life", that theirs isn't going to be an entirely minimal, sparsely textured approach. The brief "Do We Deserve Dubya?" understandably raises little enthusiasm for the Texas oilman, but on the long "Incandescent Gesture" and elsewhere, Barre Phillips's pizzicato playing is implicated in the surges of energy.

One of the joys of the album is found in the extraordinary collisions of timbre and tuning. On accordion, Oliveros's own systems of Just Intonation clash with Dana Reason's piano in European tuning, while Gelb's fluttering Japanese flute is hard to keep in tune. Yet the resulting tonal scrunches are delightful, and Barre Phillips's arco work merges imperceptibly into Oliveros's accordion. The recording quality is superb, though I had to double take when I heard the crickets in the background – not a common sound in the Pennines any time of year.

SPACEHEADS & MAX EASTLEY

THE TIME OF THE ANCIENT ASTRONAUT

BIP-HOP BLEEP04 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

In the 1970s, Max Eastley fixed taut strings to a resonating body and suspended them in a stream in North Wales. The resultant sounds appeared on his side of *New And Rediscovered Musical Instruments* (1975), an album he shared with David Toop. As well as this hydrophone, the album documented other creations such as a jangling metallophone and a whirling elastic aerophone. It was sculptor's music, surrendering control to the natural world, allowing the elements to call the tune. The prototype was the Aeolian harp, a wind-activated instrument taken by Romantic poets to symbolise the workings of the imagination. 25 years later, the title of Eastley's collaboration with the duo Spaceheads alludes to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with lines from "The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner" quoted on the cover.

Here Eastley plays the Arc, a three metre long single string stretched over wood, then sounded with a bow or glass rods and electronically enhanced. The instrument's familiar from his *Buried Dreams* album with Toop, but it still appears uncanny. The Spaceheads are Andy Diagram channelling trumpet and voice through pitchshift/harmony machines and echo loops, and Richard Harrison drumming like a man possessed and striking sheets of metal fed through electronics. At times the trio's churning wash sounds oddly close to that hydrophone in Llanfyllin, control surrendered at the interface with electricity. Elsewhere, alien voices and otherworldly discussions leak through the receptive membrane formed by the enmeshed instruments. Then Harrison and Diagram cut to the chase, pulsing and burning like Coleridge's daemons. It all has a dreamlike coherence that never lapses, perhaps because the recording was done live and in the course of a single afternoon. Or could it be that the Arc really is a bridge to some spookier elemental domain?

MORTON SUBOTNICK

VOLUME 1: ELECTRONIC WORKS

MODE 97 CD/DVD

BY CLIVE BELL

Morton Subotnick always struck me as the perfect name for an electronic composer. It conjures up a cartoon strip of a small boy's adventures in outer space: "Quick, Morty, into the Superpod before the Plutonians activate the matter zapper!" Subotnick himself, beaming and avuncular, bearded like a hip Santa Claus, looks like the ideal university teacher, introducing nervous students to the delights of oscillators and voltage controlled amplifiers. On this lovingly remastered and packaged CD you get three works spanning Subotnick's career.

1969's *Touch* was his third LP, the follow-up to his 'hit' *Silver Apples Of The Moon*. *Touch* sold a barnstorming 40,000 copies on Columbia, and Subotnick's student Carl Stone regards it as his masterpiece (see *The Wire* 194). This is full-on electronic music, owing virtually nothing to any classical idiom that preceded it, or any contemporaneous rock. Its dense squirming activity is like watching a

DIN

purveyors of fine
contemporary electronica

DIN1

Ian Boddy

Box of Secrets

swirling arabesques of analogue
synths over fractured rhythms

DIN2

Ian Boddy/Markus Reuter

Distant Rituals

dense dark cloudscapes give
way to luminous bliss

DIN3

Protagonos

Strange Geographic

alchemical blend of
amorphous & swirling textures

DIN4

Dub Atomica

Autonomic

spaced out dub for the
chilled-out generation

DIN5

Chris Carter / Ian Boddy

Caged

subterranean soundtracks
pulse and throb

DIN6

centrozoon

blast

epic ambient soundscapes
over a pulsing underscore

DIN7

ARC

Radio Sputnik

feels as well oiled as
Kraftwerk's Trans Europe Express

DIN8

Surface 10

In Vitro Tide

stretching into areas of
minimal techno and trance

DIN9

Boddy / Reuter / Mullaney

Triptych

moving somewhere between
the transient hinterlands of
ambient and dance

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Soundcheck

squid trapped in a dishwasher. Intercut are passages of bouncing metric beat. "Part 2" (the original LP's second side) is more trilling, whirling woodwind than percussive pots and pans, and employs silence to great effect. A calm, spacious landscape opens out. Subotnick's palette of rubbery plinks and bleeps may feel dated, or suffer from the cleaned up and overcontrolled nature of much electronica. And this is undeniably the sound of musicians getting the hots for technology. Back in the day, only institutions could afford this equipment, and you had to be an academic to get your hands on it. However, Subotnick has a less academic smell than most, and his ability to activate musical space is remarkable.

A Sky Of Cloudless Sulphur (1978) was created, like *Touch*, on an early analogue synth built by Don Buchla. Early Buchlas featured touchplates rather than keyboards. Using one has been compared to kneading a lump of clay. Indeed Subotnick talks of his work as sculpting in sound. *Sulphur* has many beautiful, gently tickling passages, like a tiny gamelan left out in the rain. Wilder moments include giant mosquitoes battling in a xylophone factory.

Finally there's the brand new *Gestures*, or at least the first 16 minutes of this openended piece. The synths are now software inside Morty's laptop, and he whooshes through space in stunningly cinematic fashion, like one of those trailers telling you the cinema is fitted with Dolby stereo. Again it's all about animating space and sculpting sound. It's unashamedly spectacular, until the recitation of a rather flaked out text crashlands it onto Planet New Age with a bump. This impressive CD also comes in a DVD version, bulging with 5.1 Surroundsound and graphic interfaces designed by Subotnick's son Steven.

SUPERSILENT SUPERSILENT 5 RUNE GRAMMOPHON R2018 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

In the beginning there was Veslefrek, a freely improvising trio. Then came Deathprod, from the rock group Motorpsycho. Veslefrek were Ståle Storløkken on keyboards and synthesizer, Jarle Vespestad on drums and Arve Henriksen on trumpet and electronics. Deathprod is Helge Sten, whose battery of homemade electronic instruments, ring modulators, theremins, samplers and echo machines is configured under the collective name "audio virus". From

this amalgam emerged Supersilent. The Norwegian quartet were initially heard on a triple CD, issued by Rune Grammofon in 1997. The fourth instalment was completed the following year, with Sten raising the recording studio to the status of an active participant in the group's sound. The five pieces on *Supersilent 5*, characteristically untitled, were recorded live in Bologna, Oslo and London (when they took part in the *Wire Sessions Live* series at the South Bank Centre).

Space matters increasingly in Supersilent's music. Reviewers have suggested parallels with Miles Davis's sound after his imagination had come under the influence of Karlheinz Stockhausen's work. That comparison is more than ever valid here, and it arises not just because Hennksen plays brooding trumpet within a mesh of electronics and percussion. He does the same to different effect in the group Food alongside saxophonist Iain Ballamy, where orthodox jazz touchstones are more readily to hand. The Davis affinity is more to do with an awareness that acoustic space regularly transcends the limits of performance space in spontaneous composition.

This is slow music, and that's important. Avoiding virtuosic speed might seem in keeping with the established Supersilent style: no players named on the new album's cover, just functional information and stark white squares folded within black squares. But the restrained pace also has an embedding effect. You find yourself placed within the music's atmospheres, caught up in its receding perspective, transfixed by electronic shadows on the horizon or surprised by sonic figures that loom close. As the anthropologist Edward Hall pointed out, in defiance of futurists everywhere, space has more meaning when we move slowly; sensory involvement diminishes as speed increases.

Henriksen's voice is the most distinctive breath weaving through the hardware, yet he deploys his trumpet sparingly, assembling rather than expressing. Supersilent, as Cage had it, have nothing to say and they're saying it, and they do so beautifully. In terms of atmosphere, the second track reminds me of *Pipedream* (1977), the lovely album recorded in a church by Keith Tippett playing organ and Marc Charig on cornet. But whereas their exchange formed the centre of attention, Supersilent come over like they are carving out the vault itself, constructing rather than conversing. The concluding track develops along lines that recall

the topographical sketches of Brian Eno's *On Land* (1982), inspired (as Eno was quick to admit) by Teo Macero's cavernous production on Miles Davis's Ellington tribute, "He Loved Him Madly". Elsewhere, things grow more animated in passages bearing passing resemblances to the off-kilter groove favoured by Can, Faust or This Heat. This is the more aggressive, less coolly seductive Supersilent of the first three albums. The walls close in, and for a while everything is heard in disarming close-up. *Supersilent 4* was forged in Deathprod's Audio Virus Lab, a pulse-stopping tour de force of technical wizardry, covering the full gamut of the group's musical inclinations, chilled and torrid. Edited from DAT recordings, *Supersilent 5* is a finely judged sequel. The stylistic range is narrower, but here Supersilent invite you in to relax and enjoy the surroundings.

TRICKY BLOWBACK

ANTI INC ANTI16598 CD/LP

BY JOHN MULVEY

Does commercial success invariably equate with compromise? How far can multinational corporations tolerate apparently destructive, and self-destructive, artists? Is it possible to make culturally viable music when you're consumed by a need to experiment as an act of vengeance against your paymasters rather than as a means of unfettered expression?

Such questions have bedevilled Tricky since the popular triumph of his debut, *Maxinquaye*, in 1995. In the intervening years, his albums have been patchy and treacherous, occasionally anxious to show dubious macho 'authenticity', more often expensively ragged and structureless, transparently programmed to alienate and bomb. In many ways, his career acts as a parable on the dangers of innovative music breaking into the mainstream. When that slurred, muggy distortion of HipHop became common currency – TripHop, remember? – Tricky's commendable refusal to make tepid lifestyle accessory music appeared motivated by rage rather than a coherent idea of where to progress. Hence the downward spiral of truculence and mess that bottomed out with 1998's *Angels With Dirty Faces*, and a series of tracks like "Record Companies" that are little more than compelling arguments with A&R and marketing executives.

On *Blowback*, that grim and confused war on commerce appears, at least superficially, to be

over. This time, the recriminations are relatively subtle. For a start, it's surely no coincidence that *Blowback*, Tricky's most accessible collection since *Maxinquaye* is also his first on an independent label (although Anti Inc is a subsidiary of global punk conglomerate Epitaph). Then there's the cover version of "Something In The Way", from Nirvana's *Nevermind*. Evidently, Tricky identifies with Kurt Cobain as another who wasn't just embittered by the machinations that accompanied success – he was angry, impotently, fatally, at success itself.

It's easy to read *Blowback* as the work of a man tentatively reopening negotiations with a world he's scrupulously tried to repel for the past few years. There's the engagement with North American rock's less edifying statesmen and women, with guest vocals from two of the Red Hot Chilli Peppers, Alanis Morissette, Ed Kowalczyk from the truly dire Live and, most bizarrely, Cyndi Lauper. To imagine that Tricky has just emerged from a hermetically sealed bubble of loathing is misleading, however, as theoretically more tasteful collaborations with Björk, PJ Harvey and DJ Muggs during the 'lost' years testify.

Still, much of this fascinating, infuriating record is defined by his commingling of HipHop, Electro, dancehall and, most problematically, stadium alt.rock: a hybrid again dictated, perhaps, by attention-grabbing perversity rather than less self-conscious ambitions. Some of it is just odd enough to work. New York chanter Hawkman performs "Something In The Way" like a cross between Sizzla and Eddie Vedder, while Tricky himself revisits the bobbling urban gamelan of "Ponderosa". "You Don't Wanna" is an effective synth torch song, sung by Ambersunshower, filling the Martina Topley-Bird/Kioka role, and built out of, God help us, a Eurythmics sample. And the opening "Excess" best displays *Blowback*'s signature sound: a kind of misunderstanding of contemporary American rock, where riffs are reduced to skids and scrapes while Tricky pokes up the beats and invites Alanis Morissette to emote, "Keep living".

It's here, though, that Tricky's dilemma is most acute. For all his protestations of outsider status, the awful paradox is that he's perpetually attracted to the big names and the broad strokes of the mainstream, however much he claims to be subverting them. It may be the hardest thing of all for a professional refusenik to accept, but he's far better at reorganising conventions than at destroying them. □



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The Boomerang

Recent reissues: rated on the rebound



Behind the frontline: Asian Dub Foundation

Vowing to be as powerful as the antiquated steamroller from which they took their name, **Buffalo Springfield** (Canadians Neil Young and Bruce Palmer and Yanks Stephen Stills, Richie Furay and Dewey Martin) took on the hordes of British groups invading the American charts with an ingenious blend of sun dappled folk and country, and experimental arrangements edged with rock darkness. Their tumultuous career lasted just over two years but produced an impressive portfolio of songs spread over three albums: *Buffalo Springfield*, *Buffalo Springfield Again* and *Last Time Around*. Box Set (Rhino/WSMUK 8122743242 4XCD) has been anxiously anticipated by fans and scholars of 60s West Coast rock, eager to hear the 36 previously unreleased demos salvaged from the archives. Sadly, the majority of the hitherto unheard material collected on the first three discs adds little of real value to the group's legacy. Nothing here matches the potent pop power and raw experimentation pulsing through the familiar material on Disc Four which, minus three tracks from the posthumous *Last Time Around*, replays their three official albums. Songs like "For What It's Worth", "Mr Soul", Young's magnificent montage epic "Broken Arrow" (ably assisted by producer/arranger Jack Nitzsche) and "Expecting To Fly" – with their chiming, circling electric and acoustic guitar chords, spectral harmonising, militaristic handclaps, reverberating paranoia, muted anger, instrumental breaks, rock concrete and modern jazz interludes – are major works of rock 'n' roll artistry, powerful enough, even, to survive the aspic treatment of a box set.

For what it's worth, the face of protest has changed since Buffalo Steve Stills petulantly stamped his hoof on Sunset Strip all those years ago. The complex prejudices facing British born Asians are confronted head on in the early, raw singles of **Asian Dub Foundation**, compiled on *Frontline 1993-97* (Nation NR2006 CD). Heavier on the window rattling bass back then, these tracks crackle with trembling, frustrated or coldly vicious soundbites that capture the frequently less than tolerant mood twitching the net

curtains of little England. The beauty of ADF is the exemplary way their multivoiced montages of newswire reportage, inflammatory chants, justice calls etc, resolve as exhilarating, even joyful, dub concussed commentaries laced with alt.guitar and turntablist klang, and typeset to drill bass, junglist breaks and tabla beats.

The **Black Sun Ensemble**'s sandblasted, self-titled debut (Camera Obscura CAM040 CD) originally crawled out of the Arizona desert in 1985 on the tiny Pyknotic label. Not to be confused with the similarly titled, though slightly more polished disc that Reckless issued three years later, their debut proper stands suspended in a weird twilight where dexterous flashes of psychedelic guitar pour down like silver over an ultra primitive, often thuggishly stupid, rhythm section. Over beats as weirdly propulsive as a herd of dying elephants, teenage guitar whirlwind Jesus Acedo alternates passages of electrified Eastern drone and buzzing acoustic figures that resemble the dizzying webs Robbie Basho used to spin on his Takoma releases. But perhaps the delicacy of his playing is better compared to Paisley Undergrounders like The Rain Parade or Opal. With their twisted hammer-ons and big choppy chords, tracks like "Heart Of The Sky" find Acedo stumbling over the future blueprint for basement psych. One blast of his slashing solo on "Ice Breaker", however, makes it clear that no one has come close to improving on his designs.

The academics might argue otherwise, but New York minimalism doesn't come more minimalist than **Ramones**. *Anthology* (Warner/Rhino 8122735572 2xCD) tracks the progress of the group's one catherine wheel of a riff from their 1976 debut *Ramones* to when it finally fizzled out on 1995's *Adios Amigos*. But one good riff is all any minimalist needs, and Ramones wield theirs either as a baseball bat or a bunch of wilted flowers. Both ways, it resonates loud and hard with the optimism of the 60s girl pop from which it was derived. Except someone's broken all the windows in their chapel of love, honey, and the holy vows are stained with piss. The riff's down perfect by *Leave Home* (1977); the joke's not funny any more by *Rocket To Russia* (also

1977); but with *Road To Ruin* (1978 – WEA have just reissued these first four albums with superfluous extra tracks), it's clear this is no laughing matter, it's a lifelong vocation. They dedicated themselves to it for 20 years, and now Joey Ramone's dead. Where's the justice in that?

The wildest yet most disappointing of the Cortical Foundation's recent spate of reissued obscurities is the rare 1968 debut album, *No Record* (Organ Of Corti 26 LP) from ramshackle Canadian improvisors **The Nihilist Spasm Band**. Homemade guitars clashing with hand carved kazoos, percussion instruments, electronics etc initially sound intriguing enough, but the performances are too shambolic and crazed to hold together. The end result is sheer Bedlam, as if the inmates of that notorious asylum had been handed instruments and microphones for the first time and ordered to play.

Which is rather different from the boisterous and bubbling Progressive jazz rock bash **The Keith Tippett Group** pulled together in the recording studio for *Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening* (Disconforme SLDISC1964 CD), originally released on Vertigo in 1971, complete with embryonic brain scan cover art by Roger Dean and brother Martyn. Surrounded by a band including Marc Charig on comet, trombone player Nick Evans, and Soft Machine members Robert Wyatt and Elton Dean, Tippett launches himself into his playing with a perspiring vitality that still rings true some 30 years later.

Digsowell Duets (Emanem 4052 CD) by **Lol Coxhill** was originally issued on LP by Random Radar in 1979. One side was a duet with Simon Emmerson, who took Coxhill's soprano saxophone line and, using the 'Digsowell Tapes System', reflected it back in electronically processed form, causing Coxhill to further adjust his playing. The other side was a duet with pianist Veryan Weston. It's free and delightfully wilful, with sparse references to the standard, "Embraceable You". For this reissue, 30 minutes of music from the original sessions have been added, and the original playing order restored. This deceptively lyrical, tooting record is worth

turning up loud to appreciate how crazily inventive the mesh of electronics and sax can get, with Coxhill's tone managing to sound both ravishingly expressive and cybernetically alien.

Tribe was a Detroit jazz collective and cultural information centre active during the early 1970s. At its hub was bass trombonist **Phil Ranelin**, a childhood friend and adult associate of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. He also recorded sessions with Stevie Wonder, The Temptations and The Four Tops, which helped finance his Tribe recordings. Session discipline proved beneficial to his own musical conception, where free energies are channelled into well-defined yet flexible structures. Mid-1960s Miles Davis is clearly an important springboard, and in that respect there are audible parallels with British jazz tendencies of the period, especially on *The Time Is Now!* (Hefty 32 CD) with its ubiquitous, insistent electric piano and pulsing bass guitar. *Vibes From The Tribe* (Hefty 33 CD) stands the test of time even better, gravitating towards sinuous groove and rangy funk. An eloquent trombonist, Ranelin is effectively supported by players drawn from the Tribe pool. Now based in Los Angeles, Ranelin recently convened the group Tribe Renaissance to resurrect this music.

Space was formed in 1979 by singer Thomas Buckner and two complementary woodwind players, Gerald Oshita, who died in 1992, and Roscoe Mitchell of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago. The trio recorded two finely crafted albums, *New Music For Woodwinds And Voice* (1981) and *An Interesting Breakfast Conversation* (1984), originally issued by Buckner's 1750 Arch label. The two albums have now been reissued as a double package (Mutable Music 17501 2XCD). The earlier album showcases their rhythmically ingenious and texturally rich compositions. On the second they transfer their technical poise and precision to group improvisation, assembling resilient structures balanced in space. The recordings form a fitting memorial to Oshita, and serve as a taster for Mitchell's subsequent chamber work. □ Reviewed by Julian Cowley, David Keenan, Biba Kopf, Edwin Pouncey and Ben Watson

Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

TOBY DAMMIT

TOP DOLLAR

OM PLATTEN FJORD008 CD

Top Dollar is a solo percussion record by self-styled oddball Toby Dammit, six tracks of mind-bogglingly ordinary, rhythmic drumming, spiced with some damp flanging and a few other wobbly effects. Elsewhere he drops in samples with all the sophisticated wit of Jive Bunny – at any moment you expect to hear "Pump Up The Volume". Only "Malmö Nocturne" provides any relief, with some slight symphonic swells that in this godforsaken context pass for 'atmosphere'.

THE DURUTTI COLUMN

REBELLION

ARTFUL 40 CD

Vini Reilly is undoubtedly a talented guitarist, with a style falling somewhere between Robert Fripp's foopy Frippertronics and primitive American pickers like John Fahey and Loren MazzaCane Connors. But the mishmash of *Rebellion* is a total squandering of his singular talents. The opening "4Sophia" is a pleasant instrumental bastardised by ghastly studio FX. The dislocated Syd Barrett juvenilia of "Longsight Romance" is more encouraging, but it is followed with so many patchy ideas – a histrionically sung yet perfunctory cover of Irish rebel favourite "The Fields Of Athenry"; the turgid raggapop of "Overlord Part One" – that the CD comes over like it was assembled from cutting room scraps.

JANET FEDER

SPEAK PUPPET

RER JF1 CD

Janet Feder is a Denver based acoustic guitarist who plays with doctored steel strings on an instrument further 'treated' with rows of beads, rings and other objects attached to the neck, while coaxing all sorts of alien harmonics from the body. But she deploys these effects with extreme subtlety. Primarily, she is still a folk guitarist, albeit with an extended palette, adding dark splashes of colour, oriental OMs and little choral yelps as she goes. Her nimble, finger-picking style recalls the dexterous flash of Bert Jansch or, when she just strums big, droning chords, John Fahey circa America. Indeed, the vast sense of continental America is made more overt on the more percussive pieces, which resemble Harry Partch's hobo odysseys. If the occasional use of drum machine distracts from the hands-on physicality elsewhere, some of her other guest musicians make more significant contributions, especially Margot Kimmel on harp.

DAVE FISCHOFF

THE OX AND THE RAINBOW

SECRETLY CANADIAN SC36 CD

Dave Fischoff is an American singer-songwriter who couches evocations of a half remembered childhood in hysterical layers of chorally arranged vocals, recalling the "columnated ruins" of The Beach Boys circa *Surf's Up*. Most of the tracks are vocal driven, sometimes with minimal backing mixed deep down. Consequently, it all hinges on just how mannered you find Fischoff's vocal gymnastics. He plunges dexterously down

register one minute and flutters up to a choirboy falsetto the next. When he settles in, he sounds a bit like David Sylvian, but his deliberately clumsy phrasing, rolling his tongue around tortuously extended and resolutely non-rhyming verses, locks his songs into closed concepts that fail to communicate anything other than the painstakingly laboured nature of the exercise.

DARIN GRAY & LOREN MAZZACANE CONNORS

THIS PAST SPRING

FAMILY VINEYARD FV8 CD

This Past Spring follows up guitarist MazzaCane Connors and bassist Darin Gray's first duo session, 1999's *The Lost Mariner*. It's a tough record, with MazzaCane on bloodied form throughout, unleashing the kind of stormy levels of feedback that only Gray's playing seems able to coax from him. Yet it starts off peacefully enough, with MazzaCane slowly recasting a simple three note melody, leaving Gray to catch it as it falls before they both rocket into an almost insurmountable wall of fuzz. MazzaCane makes rare use of a wah-wah pedal during some particularly heavy passages and, at certain points, the combined weight of the two players is so gravity defying, with Gray pumping endlessly heavy loops of repeating bass, they get uncannily close to sounding like Keiji Haino's *Fushitsusha*.

HANGED UP

HANGED UP

CONSTELLATION CST016 CD

Hanged Up presents a series of duo improvisations between cellist Genevieve Heistek and drummer Eric Craven, both of Montréal out-rockers Sackville, recorded by Godspeed!s Efrim at the Hotel2Tango studios. The beautifully grating tones that Heistek tears from her instrument collide with Craven's monolithically thumping rhythms in a way that's every bit as genre-bending as Tony Conrad's 1972 pow-wow with Faust, *Outside The Dream Syndicate*. Although the merciless demolition of New Order's "Blue Monday" ("New Blue Monday") feels pretty pointless, a track like "Powered By Steam" quickly wipes the smirk off your face with some monstrous klangklang that burns with the continental glory of Kraftwerk's early cross-country outings. "Bring Yr Scuba Gear" rounds off the set with Efrim and someone called Ian adding bass and electronics to a galloping Dirty Three-like hoedown. Great stuff.

LOW/DIRTY THREE IN THE FISHTANK

KONKURRENT 7 CD/LP

The purpose of Konkurrent's *In The Fishtank* series is to pair up and divert groups on tour in Holland into their recording studios for 48 hours, with the one specification that they come up with 30 minutes' worth of material for release. The results have been pretty good so far, especially when Tortoise took on local boys The Ex. But the melancholic Australian instrumentalists Dirty Three and Minnesota trio Low is an especially inspiring match. Both units make subtle use of

space and sound, often to emotionally devastating effect, and together they each bring out less overt characteristics from the other's music. The songs still sound like Low's soft spoken hymns, but Warren Ellis's unmistakable violin and Mimi Parker's wraithlike warble create a Countrified air, exemplified by their desolate take of Neil Young's "Down By The River".

MUSHROOM

FOXY MUSIC

CLEARSPOT CS049 CD

Mushroom are an octet from San Francisco who specialise in interminably limp funk jams, with ripples of cheesy Rhodes piano and parping trombone farting listlessly over a positively rigid rhythm section. Despite having worked with heavyweights like Faust, Kevin Ayers and Bundy K Brown, and claiming to be influenced by 1970s art rock, Industrial collage and space rock, they still sound like Jethro Tull jamming with The Style Council. "Grooving With Herbie" is especially nauseous, a dry hump of a failure that desperately aspires to the quicksilver fug of 70s Miles Davis, only to end up sounding like incidental music from *Confessions Of A Milkman*.

PIANO MAGIC

I CAME TO YOUR PARTY

DRESSED AS A SHADOW

ACUARELA NOIS012 CD

Piano Magic create evocative soundtracks to macabre hallucinations, their music peopled by the vague denizens of childhood nightmares. The cover could be a detail from the Chapman Brothers' sculpted vision of Hell, with a toy soldier staggering across a snowy wasteland in the shadow of a huge, partially submerged ribcage. The title track features Angèle David-Guilou reciting a surreal monologue in a bewitchingly deadpan voice beneath a little matrix of spinning electronic tones lit up with minimal piano and the sound of creaking boards. "Blood & Snow" is a Godspeed!-like, reverb guitar instrumental that leads into "The Drowning Of St Christopher", in which hypnotic bass and slurping percussion recall Soresucker-era Nurse With Wound. Although Glen Johnson's monotone vocal feels a little too heavily weighted with significance, it's not enough to break the EP's frozen spell.

PSYCHO BABA

ON THE ROOF OF KEDAR LODGE

JAPAN OVERSEAS JO0051 CD

ROVO

IMAGO

INCIDENTAL MUSIC IM00012 CD

The Psycho Baba trio originally turned up on the Yamatsuke Eye-curated cartoon Japanese noise compilation, *Shock City Shockers*. Now on their second album, they are augmented by Yoshimi and ATR of The Boredoms. Like the best of recent Boredoms material, *On The Roof...* is suffused with a tribal psychedelic underground feel, with tambura, tabla, didgeridoo and electronics combining in a series of heavily percussive freeform freakouts. But their flights are grounded by an over-reliance on tinny drum machines, and

the weediness of the electronics points up the music's lack of a real earth current.

Rovo's debut album plows a similar path a little more successfully. A Japanese supergroup based around the duo of Boredoms guitarist Seiichi Yamamoto and electric violinist Yuji Katsui of Demi Semi Quaver, their hypnotic Krautrock grooves achieve an air of ritual intensity. Again, the music is almost brought down by weedy electronics, but the addition of flutes, singing bowls and gongs keeps the freakflag flying.

BRUCE RUSSELL

PAINTING THE PASSPORTS

BROWN

CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES035 CD

This, the first solo album that Bruce Russell (of The Dead C and A Handful Of Dust) has released on his own label, follows up the extended concrete experiments of his last Siltbreeze LP, *Project For A Revolution In New York*. Recorded live at two performances in New Zealand, it's his most satisfying solo outing to date. The title is a quote from Bob Dylan's "Desolation Row", and the atmosphere is as bleakly surreal, with backwards bass patterns rising from the murk and hinting at phantom rock structures within the Industrial carnage. Here, the tortured moaning of his analogue tape manipulations (sourced from A Handful Of Dust's *Anabase* LP) combine with cracking atonal guitar and choice audience babble. "You can't take him anywhere," despairs a particularly astute audience member.

THE STARS

TODAY

PSF PSFD1001 CD

Named after Syd Barrett's ill-fated post-Floyd group with Pink Fairies drummer Twink, The Stars are a Japanese psychedelic quartet born from the ashes of West Coast obsessives White Heaven. But this EP is a lot more concise and poppy than the heavy Quicksilver glories of old. "Wind In Three Quarter" is an exhilarating slice of folk-pop, recalling The Byrds or even The Rain Parade, but the opening "Today" points the most positive way ahead. Over a riff that nods to Television's "Venus", vocalist You Ishihara runs down the days of the week before stepping out of the way of an inevitable, yet fantastic Michio Kurihara guitar solo.

UP-TIGHT

UP-TIGHT

UP-TIGHT UT001 CD

Up-Tight are a noxious young trio from Tokyo, all acolytes of the legendary Japanese psych group Les Rallizes Desnudes, who augment their sound with crushing, Sabbath-styled dynamics, earsplitting acid leads and beautiful Velvets-inspired ballads. The opening "Melt Rain" filters the thug rock of UK greasers like The Deviants through a PSF aesthetic, with epic levels of feedback and sustain. If song structures are mostly kept loose, allowing for lots of noisy improvisation, generally the disc is anchored by heavy riffs. Just when you thought you'd got to grips with Tokyo's paradigm destroying psych scene, this one hits like a sucker punch. □

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

HENRY & LOUIS MEET BLUE & RED

JAH JAH NEVER FAIL I
BSI BSI021-1 7"

Henry & Louis are Jack Lundie and More Rockers' Andy Scholes, while Blue & Red is an alternate incarnation for Rob Smith, from Smith & Mighty – all from Bristol. Here they are joined by Jamaican Steve Harper, aka Shalom, who manages to deliver an upful vocal – unusual these days for a track carrying righteous subject matter. The dub turns out to be a storming modern stepper that concludes far too early. This limited prerelease signals an imminent showcase set, with contributions from Johnny Clarke and Willie Williams, among others.

HYPNOTIX

KUMAH: SPIRIT OF THE WORD
AFRICAN DANCE ADR01002 CD

Hypnotix spent many years building a reputation as an ethno-reggae rock group in Prague first and then the wider Czech Republic. What distinguished them from many other outfits operating in the same area was Bourama Badji, their Senegalese vocalist, the musical dedication of the group members and the vision of bassist Michal Ditrich. They also got to work with African Headcharge's engineer Louis Beckett (now with Asian Dub Foundation, but still son of trumpeter Harry). With the separation of the Czech and Slovak Republics came a slimming down of the group, a tightening up of their percussion base and a conscious move towards a sound more dominated by looser African polyrhythms. Though they still come from a dub root, they have managed to work up a much more satisfying framework for their obvious talents, especially the chanting style of Bourama and the driving bass sound of Ditrich, which characterise many of this set's best tunes.

WAYNE JARRETT

BUBBLE UP
WACKIE'S WR191 CD

Lloyd 'Wackie' Barnes set up his Bulwackie's operation in the Bronx, where he developed a super heavy roots sound; around the same time, Afrika Bambaataa was throwing down new beats in the gymnasium. This CD is part of the Wackie's

label's continuing reissue programme of Barnes's productions. Wayne Jarrett had a vocal quality and delivery somewhere between Horace Andy and Bim Sherman. Featuring six tracks, this showcase vocal and dub set is worth investigating, if only for the final tune "Holy Mount Zion", which is carried on a slow but insistent rhythm reminiscent of Tubby's mixes of Yabby You.

LAUGHIN' GAS THE RED SESSIONS

LAUGHIN' GAS BAD01 CD

PHASE 5 SPACE BAR

ROUND TRIP MARS 2001 CD

Judging by the crop of dub inflected albums emerging from New Zealand lately, reports of giant ganja plants growing wild in the country should be expected soon. Laughin' Gas have been playing in and around Dunedin for seven years or so, producing music of a quaint quirkiness that comes across like Soft Machine meeting Channel One in a psychedelic bouncy castle as directed by Joe Meek. A dreadful Techno track, despite having the great title "To Lula By Train", goes some way to breaking the spell, but other than that this has got to be some kind of dimension thing.

Straight out of Auckland comes the label Round Trip Mars, run by a character called Stinky Jim. Not confined to dubwise material, the label nevertheless has associations with the UK's Different Drummer imprint. Phase 5 conjure up a cool and sophisticated dubby nu-jazz – rather than jazzy nu-dub – sound. Occasionally, a track title will suggest something out of the ordinary, and "Verb Vendor", "Bag Juice" and "Mothman Skunk" (for which Burnt Friedman provides a Nonplace remix) do not disappoint.

PEEPINGTOM LIQUIDSAND

INTOXIGENE INTOX007 CD

A compelling debut from a shabbily named Swiss duo (Vincent Haenni and Gabriele Scotti). Recently the pair have been sconing live sets for synthesized images and real-time projections, as well as creating soundscapes for public readings by French actor Carlo Brandt. This album juxtaposes samples of their work mined from

across the spectrum of musical styles and literary genres – from the great French poets to a 70s cookbook for the American housewife. Resolutely downbeat but never dismal, on occasion their applied gloss suggests a Saatchi & Saatchi dubwise presentation, but the variation and humour redirects us to the real agenda. Imagine Erik Satie, back and rocking in a languid fashion.

LEE PERRY BLACK ARK SINGLES SELECTOR TOO ASCENSION ANCD003 CD

Sonic paintballing anyone? If one 'unofficial' Scratch compilation deserves recommendation among all the dross bearing his name, then this Australian set has to be it. A 22 track dub companion to match the vocal, DJ and instrumental set released last year, it's a feast of invention and sheer studio daring compiling some of the strongest tunes ever to escape the Black Ark. Versions of such classics as Augustus Pablo's "Vibrate On" and The Heptones' "Mystery Babylon" line up with lesser known delights such as The Meditations' overlooked but inspiring "Land Of Love" ("Land Of Dub") and the all-time Upsetter rare groove "Rejoice Skank", a version of The Silvertones' spookily righteous chant "Rejoice Jah Jah Children". All these sides have been rereleased in the UK as limited edition 7" vinyl singles on a recreated Black Art imprint, which are now impossible to get hold of outside the collectors' market.

LE PEUPLE DE L'HERBE

000+
PIAS 042 CD

VARIOUS DUB THIS NET: ALTERED CONNECTIONS 1

HYPERTUNEZ HTZ001 CD

Le Peuple De L'Herbe formed in 1997 around the nucleus of DJs Stan and Pee, who had both been running HipHop jams in the bars of their hometown Lyon. Drummer Psychostick and trumpeter N'Zeng came later, when the sound of the group was designed to swing between fusion and clash. This debut album pulls together a selection of their work so far. It includes both

sides of their first Supadope single, "Herbman Skank" and "PH Theme", the former being cartoon ska and the latter a jazz 'n' scratch rap in Wolof. Over the past couple of years the alliances they have formed with ADF and Adnan Sherwood define the scope of their current sound, which is at once unselfconscious, eclectic and joyful, typifying much dancefloor orientated music coming out of France.

Hypertunez.com is a Website that gathers together all kinds of electronic music. One of its most eminent curators is global dub pilot extraordinaire Capitaine Laurent Diouf, of Wreck This Mess fame, a show on Radio Libertaire in Paris. Laurent has done as much as anyone to champion dub by any means necessary. Here he collects new roots, breaks, beats, dub and trance dub from the site's 'Dub This Net' section, which reviews all bass driven things. Highlights are the tracks involving South London's Digidub, who always manage to come up with some twisted angle on the genre, and V-Neck, whose album *Dub Fiction* provided one of the most inventive dub outings of last year.

YABBY YOU

JESUS DREAD 1972-1975

VOLUME 2

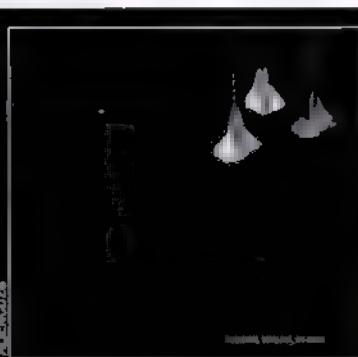
SIMPLY VINYL/BLOOD & FIRE SV318 LP

The second part of this great compilation is available once again in the vinyl format it was made for. The advice is not to hang around too long, as I understand these Blood & Fire rereleases, issued in partnership with specialists Simply Vinyl, are strictly limited editions. Recorded at the Black Ark, Randy's, Dynamics and Channel One, all the tracks were eventually voiced and mixed at Tubby's by the master himself, with his pupils Philip Smart and Prince Jammy under tight manners. They are among the cream of Jamaican devotional music – timeless and mesmerising. They simultaneously transcend and proudly represent the genre in which they were born. If one track were to stand alone as an example of Vivian 'Yabby You' Jackson's talents as an artist and producer, it must be the truly awesome "Jesus Dread", with the combination DJ attack of Dillinger and Trinity paying rightful tribute to Jackson as the creator of a unique sound in reggae. [



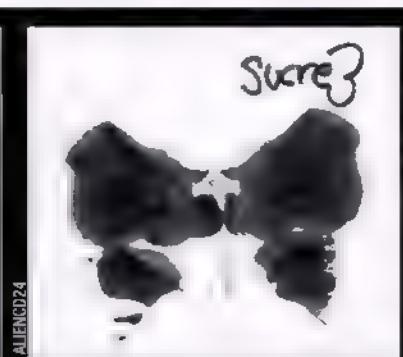
KEIJI HAINO

Abandon All Words At A Stroke,
So That Prayer Can Come Spilling Out 2CD



KRISTIAN, SHALABI, ST-ONGE

Self-titled CD



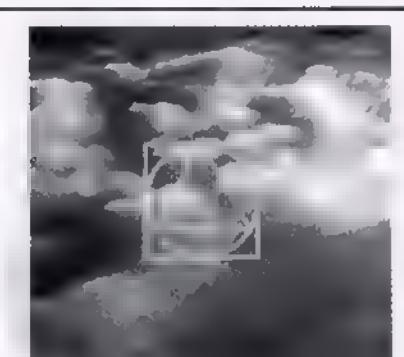
MONSTRE

Sucré 3 CD



mitchell akiyama

hope that lines don't cross



tomas jirku

immaterial

Global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

H AL-AJAMI & A USHAYSH LE CHANT DE SANAA

INSTITUT DU MONDE ARABE 321029 CD

The tacit assumption upon which *Le Chant De Sanaa* is based – that a really good singer can entice robins to alight on the stem of a hookah – is proven several times over during the five extended performances contained here. The sinewy tenor voices of Hasan Al-Ajami, the scion of a Yemeni family of master vocalists, and Ahmed Ushaysh, who gently taps rhythmic counterpoint on a copper tray to Al-Ajami's plucked qanbus (a lute variation indigenous to Yemen), invite the listener into a lost world of court-sponsored art music. As with most other titles produced by Institut Du Monde Arabe, the production is flawless, with the rapidly strummed qanbus seated in the psychoacoustic splendour of a tiled hall with high ceilings.

BAU BLIMUNDO

LUSAFRIC 362262 CD

Rufino Almeida, aka Bau (Portuguese for 'box'), used to play violin, cavaquinho and guitar for Cesaria Evora, eventually becoming her bandleader, before he embarked on a solo career. Slipping the bonds of the blues-like morna for which his former employer is renowned, Bau steps out with arrangements of traditional melodies from his native Cape Verde. His violin is front and centre throughout, evidencing a newfound love of signal processing. Yet his lighthearted, anti-gravity melodies most closely resemble the gypsy jazz of Stephane Grappelli's Hot Club De France. Bau's Cape Verde may be characterised euphemistically as possessing 'desperate beauty', but nothing on *Blimundo* suggests anything less than joy on demand.

CULTURE MUSICAL CLUB BASHRAF: TARAB INSTRUMENTALS FROM ZANZIBAR

DIZIM 4509 CD

Tarab music makes the most of its Indian Ocean seaport origins, its alluring alloy comprising the Rococo lushness of a Bollywood film orchestra merged with instrumentation and melodies imported from the Arab Emirates, above subtly African rhythms. Recordings of Zanzibar orchestras and 'music clubs' are often painfully mannered, typical for state-sanctioned troupes of a more polite cast. Happily, the numerous members of Culture Music Club were recorded on site in Zanzibar's funky Stone Town district. Their instrumental pieces emphasise unison performances, stopping short for brief interludes nimbly tapped out on the qanun (large hammered dulcimer) well in excess of posted speed limits. Each track spotlights one or more virtuoso Club players: Khamis Shehe's violin intros recall the glory days of singer Umm Kalthoum's most emotive orchestrations, and Haj Juma Wadi traces glowing filigrees with his ney flute. Given the local pressure to record songs, the fact that this is a vocal-free set is all the more remarkable.

DON SANTIAGO JIMENEZ SR VIVA SEGUIN: HISTORIC MEXICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC VOL 12

ARHOOLIE 7023 CD

50 years on, Santiago Jimenez's music is still incredibly popular in the traditional Mexican market, and these amazing sides from the pioneer of the Tex Mex border style known variously as conjunto or musica norteña reveal why. Brandishing Germany's bequest to Mexican culture, the accordion, he sprays bawdy, ebullient riffs on all within earshot. On a par with his coruscating squeezebox is the ultra percussive double bass wielded by Ismael Gonzales. The remastering from 78prm disc is excellent. Indeed, played loud enough, the brighter sounding tracks convey what it must have felt like to experience Jimenez and his group at Gaucho's Gardens, during their extended residency in San Antonio, Texas.

GRANMOUN LÉLÉ DAN KER LELE

LABEL BLEU LBLC2558 CD

Leading his family drum and harmony voice ensemble through a series of trance-inducing songs, Granmoun Lélé comes on like the Reunion Islands' answer to Nigerian drum master Olatunji. If the pounding repertoire doesn't exhibit much variety, it is leavened somewhat by the overlapping vocal rounds which are staggered atop precise, punishing beats. Yet in spite of the leader's vocal exhortations, the preferred jackhammer mid-tempo groove proves wearying after the fourth track or so.

THE MOKEN SEA GYPSIES OF THE ANDAMAN SEA

TOPIC TSCD919 CD

The latest in a series of field recordings culled from the British Library's National Sound Archive, these tapes of an itinerant people living off the coast of the Malay peninsula were made by researcher Tom Vater. The cast of survivors sing and drum during a brief visit to a Myanmar beach. Most of their lives are spent on board houseboats, though increasingly the tribe is trading its nomadic, seafaring life for permanent residency on land. The songs here mimic the cadence and emotion of mourning, backed by handclaps and a single drum made from a plastic barrel. Sometimes the melodies devolve to contemplative humming, the singers seemingly afflicted with attention deficit syndrome. Then, with only a kernel of the original song remaining, the group investigate its lyrics – as often about chicken and lobsters as romance – with restated force. For the most part, the Moken's cheerfully distracted songs leave one puzzled as to why anyone would forsake a life at sea, despite the obvious hardships.

THE ÖKRÖS ENSEMBLE I LEFT MY SWEET HUSBAND

ROUNDER 821615163 CD

Though these musical tales of cursed family relationships and girls doing unspeakable things

with carrots may be vanishing from village life in Transylvania, the star talents of The Ökrös Ensemble have shouldered the custodial burden and endowed this endangered folk music with new life. Many of these songs represent rare points of commonality between mainstream Hungarian society and the Romany culture of the country's gypsies. Occasionally, the melodies threaten to turn maudlin, only to shift up into another, more invigorating movement when least expected. The string arrangements pit the dense chord clusters of drone violins against wildly ornamented melodies.

CHIEF STEPHEN OSITA OSADEBE & HIS NIGERIAN SOUNDMAKERS

SOUND TIME
INDIGEDISC ID495001 CD

HARUNA ISHOLA & HIS APALA GROUP APALA MESSENGER

INDIGEDISC ID495002 CD

Emerging from a conversational haze recalling *What's Going On?*, Chief Stephen Osadebe (can there be a credible Nigerian Highlife practitioner without an honorific attached to his name?) greets the faithful and gets down to business. All the elements fall in place immediately. Lulling palmwine rhythms, mesmeric guitar arpeggios, a trumpet solo torn from a manachi band and the Chief's carefully parsed singing, bathed in public address reverb and pitched somewhere between earnest concern and delirium. As always, just when the horn section shows up and creates inviting tension, the master fader is pulled down. This disc also serves as a reminder of an enduring truth, that nobody is more intent on getting their money's worth out of a wah-wah pedal than a West African guitarist.

Andy Frankel, Indigo Disc executive and the producer responsible for *Sound Time*'s sparkle, has also assembled a posthumous anthology of vintage (1967-71) apala tracks from one of its progenitors, Yoruban bandleader Haruna Ishola and his ensemble of talking drummers and backing singers. Apala is one among a family of minimalist takes on juju (alongside fuji, waka and others), its trademark being the walking bass lines played on what sounds like a very large thumb piano. Seeing how most Yoruban street music is usually available only on cassette or not at all, it's a real pleasure to revel in the comparative fidelity of these remastered drum workouts. However, most of the cuts are edited for single play, with only the closing "Awa Kani Bawan Gbadie Ta Fowo Ra'Wo" stretching to the epic jams associated with the likes of Ayinla Kollington.

VARIOUS ROUGH GUIDE TO MERENGUE AND BACHATA

WORLD MUSIC NETWORK RGNET1039 CD

As with so many of the excellent compilations issued under the Rough Guide imprimatur, a single track can justify the purchase price. In this case, Nelson Rong's "El Dueno De La Noche" seals the deal for this set of seldom

heard music from the Dominican Republic. The singer is the voice of desperation itself, announcing the protagonist's complete surrender to his lover, and the accelerating rumba rock guitars snap out the son-styled melody, sounding as though they are strung with industrial strength rubber bands. Though homeopathic tinctures of rara and other popular forms from neighbouring Haiti inform many of these songs, merengue and bachata still sport the cultural artefacts of Spanish occupation. As with salsa and other Spanish dance musics, the world turns on the quick-fingered response of the bongolero, an element ordinarily so subtle as to escape notice, almost.

VARIOUS

YUGOSLAVIA: WORLD LIBRARY
OF FOLK AND PRIMITIVE MUSIC
ROUNDER 1166117452 2XCD

As with all of his numerous ethnomusicological surveys, the two discs making up Alan Lomax's investigation of Yugoslavian regional music provide a headspinning overview of a cultural landscape split into six different regions (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia), each of equal fascination. That Lomax didn't have to put in the legwork ordinarily associated with his song prospecting – these slightly muffled recordings were made at a 1951 folk festival by Peter Kennedy – in no way reduces their intrinsic fascination. Crystalline dulcimer chimes, double reeds whose lineage connects to Highland bagpipes, and vocal groups exploring microtonality all feature here, as does a Slovenian folk orchestra, whose recital slowly builds to a footstomping madness worthy of AC/DC. The Macedonian flutes heard on the second disc come across like lost relatives of the Madang flutes of New Guinea, with comparably reduced harmonic complexity alongside beautifully positioned grace notes.

DR HUKWE ZAWOSE & CHARLES ZAWOSE

A SPEAR TO THE SOUL
WOMAD SELECT WSCD107 CD

With his idiosyncratic melodies, novel instrumentation (his double-manual ilimba thumb pianos are the stuff of legend) and a multiple octave voice capable of tormenting a microphone capsule into a premature demise, Hukwe Zawose may just qualify as Tanzania's answer to Captain Beefheart. While the two co-performers featured on Zawose's pathbreaking Triple Earth albums (which were released over a decade ago now) passed away some time ago, on *A Spear To The Soul* his nephew Charles lends support on his own ilimba as well as background vocals. Whether sawing a spike fiddle with poignancy or wailing in a range perceivable only by small mammals, Zawose is never less than entirely weird and wonderful. This very acoustic set will stand out in bold relief against the 'East meets West' big band set due later in the year from Real World, in which Zawose collaborates with Canadian ambienteur Michael Brook. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

DJ ASSAULT

OFF THE CHAIN FOR THE Y2K VOLUME SIX

INTUIT SOLAR ITU1008 CD

You probably wouldn't want to have him as your sex therapist much less your lover, but if you need to get your party started right and don't mind some cartoonishly grotesque sexism, Assault's your man. Nothing, I mean nothing, moves like an Assault mix: Joey Beltram, The Eurythmics, Juan Atkins, Dan Bell, Lyn Collins, Mike Dunn, Snoop Dogg and Carl Craig fly by at Shirley Muldowney speeds, while the seriously amped Bass moves so much booty that even poor old Uncle Luke wouldn't be able to keep up. Rarely has music been conceived with such purity of purpose: the music's so goddamned fast that you can't possibly dance, all you can do is shake your tuckus. This came out in the States last year, but the aesthetic of jigglin' body parts never goes out of style. (Peter Shapiro)

COLDCUT & THE GUILTY PARTY

RE:VOLUTION

NINJA TUNE ZEN88 CD /7"

As an ugly American, I plead ignorance when presented with names like Hague, Portillo and Widdecombe. Good thing "Re:volution" rocks hard enough to smash borders, then Coldcut deliver a hunk of burning punk-funk masquerading as the cynical epilogue to Steinski's "And The Motorcade Sped On". While Tom and Mass Media cut and pasted in homage to fallen soldier JFK, Matt Black and Jon More seem intent on using their lunatic edits to smash open the asylum doors (but who's inside?). Tolling in the distance, Big Ben breaks a sweat trying to avoid cut-up synths, aggressive motorcycle drums and shards of metal guitar. The pace is frenetic, as if Shocklee/Sadler had swung axes or The Beatnigs had survived into the 1990s. Bonus track "Space Journey" is way tacky, especially after the digital hardcore. Of course they're no Gang Of Four, but they're not KLF either.

D-STYLES

RETURN TO PLANETARY DETERIORATION

GALACTIC BUTT HAIR CMPD001 12"

While the world waits for the re-emergence of The Invisibl Skratch Pkllz, the reclusive D-Styles polishes his monster B-movie technique with these excerpts from his forthcoming debut album, *Phantazmagorea*. D-Styles is more than some one trick pony; his production work with Third Sight has always been interesting, if not a little disturbing. The title track here is no different as he and ExtraKD jam over a heavy Old School beat that kicks so hard your needle will grow weary of each thud-inducing revolution. The highlight is Q-Bert's guest turn on the B-side, "Clifford's Mustache". Perhaps the best evidence The Skratch Pkllz have for their claim that scratching equals music is the way they develop mood and feeling. Of course it's the same mood all the time (juvenile terror, a fixation with gore) but the combination of smutty vocal samples

and time-reducing scratches is discomforting like a dentist's drill.

THE FOG

THE FOG

DINKYTOWN DNK001 CD

HipHop is the assumption behind Andrew Broder's one man, 'fascist-killing' bedroom recording. It serves as a philosophy of how things fit together, rather than as an excuse to loop beats mercilessly. He uses his turntables for mood and haze, with scratches sounding more like a swarm of locusts than an army of crabs. "Check Fraud" is like Kid Koala on downers as Broder scratches some whimpering trumpets. "Fucked Up Fuck Up Blues" isn't as fucked up as its title, but its Spacemen 3-like layers of texture are exhausting nonetheless. His occasional lyrics are the type that look bad on paper ("Tell it to the millipedes/The casserole was good/And the drives were so nice/Welcome to the worst part of your life") but howl like prematurely peeled scabs when committed to sound.

DJ JESTER

RIVER WALK RIOTS

TWO-TEN CCX0009 CD

Despite the legions of would-be DJs scumming about every town on Earth looking for gigs, few selectors nowadays actually have personality. That's what makes burned 'n' xeroxed jobs like Jester's so charming, it's the little flourishes and inflections of humour. I mean, Jester's got Willie Nelson on here claiming he listens to HipHop. A Richard Simmons dominatrix sample warms the disc up for a surging Iron Butterfly, and while Jester occasionally defaults for woefully predictable breaks ("Apache" and "Theme From SWAT"), he always returns to his Texan roots by mixing in both kinds of 'real' music – Country and Western. By the time "Walk This Way" gives way to Terence Trent D'Arby's "Wishing Well", you don't know whether to laugh, cry or laugh to keep from crying. Stick around until the end, where he laces the lo-fi guitar spritz of Pavement's "Summer Babe" with a beat. Now that, DJ, makes my day.

NAS FEATURING QB'S FINEST

OOCHEE WALLY/ FIND YA WEALTH

COLUMBIA 79586 12"

At this point you really want to pull for Nas, if only out of respect. "Oochie Wally" is one of those massive tunes that will sound dated by year's end, but we grab on and ride nevertheless, because life is too short to wait around for another *Illmatic*. Producer EZ Elpee hits a home run with an absurd loop nicked from a 1975 Gong track, just the type of wandering, anti-melodic screed you've come to not expect from him. He bundles in the bellydance-sounding wailing souls, and by the fourth listen you wish you didn't understand English, because hearing Nas's played out millionaire rap ("But my name ain't Regis," he clarifies) ruin the beat is quite some summer downer. His Queensbridge comrades barely fare

better, while the second verse that seems to infer a gang rape isn't all that wholesome.

NEW FLESH

COMMUNICATE

BIG DADA BD030 CD/12"

Trading in the 'black-lunged downdraught howling through Jack the Ripper's London' atmosphere of their old records for 'tradewind zephyr refreshing deserted Caribbean beach', this British HipHop crew have shed their sclerotic shell and grown some new flesh indeed. While they've called in a favour from sort of labelmate Gift Of Gab (from Blackalicious), it's not just the ringer that's responsible for the new direction (although having one of the most creative and emotive MCs around on your record never hurts). On "Communicate", Toastie Taylor no longer sounds like a Death Metal singer trapped in Cutty Ranks's body; instead he shows off a previously unheard, sexy falsetto and actually enunciates. The producer, Part 2, soups up his Robin Reliant hooptie and aquaplanes, fishtails and does donuts across the potholes in Timbaland's lawn. A great summer single and the perfect antidote to the insultingly awful DJ Pied Piper. (Peter Shapiro)

RZA

IT MUST BE BOBBY/COUSINS

KOCH KOC8182 12"

Dipping his loose leaf cigarettes in honey, the Ruler tries to rebound from his *Bobby Digital* debacle with his new *Digital Bullet* project. From the passionless female cooing to the oppressively repetitive piano loop, "It Must Be Bobby" sounds like an uneventful Wu demo. Though RZA sounds hungry on the mic ("Strikin' you like Beatlemania"), the same can't be said for Mathematics's poor drums. The comparatively upbeat "Cousins" is an improvement, but doesn't really match anything from RZA's recent turns on *The Wu* or Ghostface's *Supreme Clientele*. But did those two albums feature a French MC bragging "Je suis le chef"? RZA prods, "I sold 20 million records, bitch!" but the lady in the background laughs unheeded.

TECHNO ANIMAL

DEAD MAN'S CURSE EP

MATADOR OLE5072 CD

Justin Broadrick and Kevin Martin have this ability to make compelling, expressive music that feels totally drained of any human influence. Perhaps it's an obvious reference to cite carnivores, but Techno Animal just gnaw and claw and refuse to be refused. "City Of Glass" is a terrifying example, if only because of those irksome howls booming from somewhere beyond your stereo speaker. "Dead Man's Curse" grates and throbs like a migraine, the sound of contusion. Bile builds through each of guest poet Roger Robinson's verses, until it all comes tumbling down in a magnetic thresh. The Trinidadian forces words over the feedback, jumpcutting through some chilling moments of bloody racism and police brutality but never breaking a sweat. "Be cursin' with your last breath till the time of death," he implores repeatedly. Despite his mastery of eking out

heavy emotion from everyday language, Robinson ultimately wavers on the power of the word in the face of state violence and repression. "What good are poems? What's their use? If not to soak up spilt blood or to wipe away the tears of grieving families... No ink scribbled on paper gave them one single extra heartbeat, or one extra tide of breath surging from their lungs."

VARIOUS

THE FAT BEATS COMPILATION

KOCH KOC8203CD/LP

Bumpy Knuckles's whole steeze is based on passionate disaffection, as in "not caring about crushing you". The man yells and yaws and hurts your feelings with the best of them and, on the Primo-produced slugfest "The Lah", he cracks on Chinese girls with flat butts (not true, incidentally), rock music and Allen Iverson's flow. Your friends at Fat Beats also back-cue in a major way and bring back oldies from Street Smartz and Juggaknots. The former's "Metal Thangs" might feature OC and Pharaoh Monche, but FT (short for 'Fuck That') steals the show by bragging, "I'm sorta psycho like a retard on a motorcycle." The Juggaknots' "Clear Blue Skies" is one of those breathy, beautiful and transcendent moments when HipHop just gets it right. Over levitating atmospherics, BMS and the Brewin don whiteface and explore the complicated issue of interracial relationships from the perspectives of a jiveass dad and his downass son. Condemning the darker hues, the racist dad judges, "Damn savages who ravages the buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken/With the first dibs on the nbs."

VARIOUS

FUNKY PRECEDENT VOLUME II

MATADOR OLE4812V CD/2XLP

If you've been following this column, you may recall the *Motorcycle John Schoohouse Funk* comp that highlighted Old School kid groups getting dirty. NoMayo is the Los Angeles-based organisation that was founded to raise dough and ensure that the lessons of The Funk don't skip tomorrow's youth. Unfortunately, this Bay Area instalment doesn't really match up with its Southern Californian predecessor. Heavy on 'go nowhere', stonefaced MCing and predictable battle chill production, *Volume II* seems to sell the Bay's diverse charms short. Equal parts Blue Note and Dirtstyle, the tight San Fran trio (bass, drums, turntables) Live Human get down in a way few will ever approach. One moment the resin-caked fingerboard of the upright is getting torn up, the next moment you hear Brand Nubian's "All For One" jamming with a real live funky drummer. Azeem's "Contradictions" best fits the mood of the affair as he directs his battle rhymes at the political doublespeak that caused America's schools to get this way in the first place. Rashinel and Eye-Cue of Hobo Junction make a welcome return and show all the young dudes how it's done, concluding by song's end, "We don't do enough of that". A strange but heartfelt turnaround for the label that started out with HP Zinker, The Dustdevils and cheeky NWA sleeve references. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

ANKER/CRISPRESS/MAZUR POETIC JUSTICE

DACAPO DC9460 CD

Lotte Anker played soprano with drummer Marilyn Mazur's Primi Band. She allots more time to the tenor during this trio session, recorded in Copenhagen last August. That may suggest additional muscle, but Mazur's delicacy and attentiveness favour brittle tensions, and Marilyn Crispell, whose capacity to storm is often implied, mostly pursues a contemplative course. The set comprises 14 brief and stylistically varied pieces. Each precisely enacts a compact drama of harmony and rhythm, distributing forces to achieve balance and poise. The path to resolution is invariably eventful. Vocalist Josefina Cronholm appears on three tracks.

VIV CORRINGHAM & PETER CUSACK OPERET

REVIEW RERE121/LC08388 CD

During the mid-70s, Peter Cusack spent time at the Institute of Sonology in Utrecht. Whether tinkering with acoustic stringed instruments, manipulating live electronics or organising environmental recordings, his music is always alert to the intrinsic properties of sound. On Operet he turns his attention to song forms – some are his own, others are drawn from Turkey, Macedonia and Azerbaijan. His ingeniously crafted settings, with contributions from bassist John Edwards, saxophonist Tom Chant and Sukhdeep Singh on tabla, make for fascinating listening. Singer Viv Corringham, whose work with Mike Cooper has proven her blues credentials, provides a steady focus within these unorthodox yet entirely persuasive arrangements.

CHRISTY DORAN'S NEW BAG BLACK BOX

DOUBLE MOON DMCHR71022 CD

Operating out of Switzerland, the Irish electric guitarist is a considerable player but his creative vision has not always done justice to his talents. His New Bag quintet boasts Indian percussionist Muthuswamy Balasubramoniam on mridangam, but the format is basically jazz-nuanced rock with Bruno Amstad's routine vocals and uncomfortable lyrics occupying the foreground. It's difficult to envisage the audience for such a formula with so many more inviting alternatives around. New bag; black box; case closed.

TØRE ELGARØY THE SOUND OF THE SUN

RUNE GRAMMOFON R2017 CD

Elgarøy evidently approaches the electric guitar as a laptop orchestra or portable electronic music studio. These 12 solar solos range in length from 22 seconds to six minutes plus, with even the most concise burst appearing layered and arranged. Much aggressive energy is discharged through elephantine bellowing and raw white noise. These are interspersed with reflective moments and even melodic episodes. Many of his sounds are recognisable from elsewhere, hardcore as well as abstract musics, but there's some tidy shaping being done.

FRITH/DROUET/SCLAVIS I DREAM OF YOU JUMPING

VICTO 072 CD

Less a trio than a convergence of worlds: electric guitarist Fred Frith from rock's exploratory margins; percussionist Jean-Pierre Drouet, whose pedigree encompasses Stockhausen's intuitive music and the refined improvising group New Phonic Art; and reedsman Louis Sclavis, one of the truly commanding imaginations in jazz. This live recording captures the meeting of the three at the Musique Actuelle Festival in May 2000. The cover quotes Charles Darwin enthusing about sponges and corals, and the music readily suggests such organic proliferation. Sounds link and spread, jagged then smooth, frenetic then gradual, clearly defined then coalescing. A vivid and fertile combination.

JIM HERSHMAN & ERIC VON ESSEN SMALL TALK

LAUGHING BUDDHA LBP992008 CD

Standards are smoothly elaborated by this acoustic guitar and bass duo. The set is tinged with poignancy following the premature death of Von Essen, an immensely gifted bassist, in 1997. Prior to moving to Sweden, where he was a professor of jazz studies, Von Essen was much in demand in Los Angeles, where his skill as a melodist was valued by suave players such as pianist Jimmy Rowles and trumpeter Art Farmer. Hershman shares his lucidity, and while their interpretations of Mancini, Bill Evans, Johnny Mandel and the like won't change the course of your life, the stamp of quality musicianship is obvious everywhere.

LEE KONITZ PARALLELS

CHESKY JD213 CD

The inimitable Konitz may be less supple than he was, but his ability to steer the alto saxophone along unsuspected paths, gliding through a maze of melodic options, is still a real pleasure. Tenor player Mark Turner shadows him faithfully on such rich ground as Lenny Tristano's "317 East 32nd" and Konitz's own "Palo Alto". Guitarist Peter Bernstein forms an articulate bridge to a sympathetic rhythm section, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin. Though it was recorded in a New York church, the sound is as translucent and airy as the music demands.

JOËLLE LÉANDRE & RYOJI HOJITO SAPPORO DUETS

JAZZHALO/TONESETTERS TS013 CD

JOËLLE LÉANDRE & GIORGIO OCCHIPINTI INCANDESCENCES

JAZZHALO/TONESETTERS TS007 CD

At 50, Joëlle Léandre is one of the towering musicians of her generation. Ryoji Hōjito, a longterm collaborator with Otomo Yoshihide, is a remarkably tactile pianist whose precise touch on the keyboard and measured delving into the interior are as communicative as the notes he plays. The vastly experienced bassist clearly

recognises something special in this meeting and is determined to mark the occasion with emphatic playing, especially with the bow. A shared soundworld is established immediately; intimate yet rigorous investigations follow, with room for laughter.

In his sleeve notes for *Incandescences*, Bertrand Serra says, "These two musicians are too alike to simply mirror one another". It's a neat paradox and perfectly apt; Léandre and Occhipinti have been working as The European Duo since 1995. The pianist, from Sicily, is rising in stature (this live recording dates from 1997). His style is restless, showering sparks, flurries and allusions. It's often disjunctive, skipping logical connections and making bold leaps across the keyboard's expanse. He matches the bass virtuoso in the confidence of his soloing. Léandre is recorded less graphically close here, but assured improvising and lightning responsiveness justify the album's title.

JOE MCPHEE ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT MUSIC INC AMI003 CD

It's become something of a reflex response to declare that any new release from saxophonist and trumpeter Joe McPhee is a cause for celebration, but *Abstract* raises certain reservations. Recording quality is adequate for an informal document. It's good to hear the under-recorded altoist Maury Coles, but overall the accompanying quartet operate well below McPhee's customary level and he ignites only sporadically. The ensemble playing is too often scrappy, made worse intermittently by gratuitous electronic effects. For devotees only.

MAX NAGL ENSEMBLE RAMASURI

HATOLOGY 575 CD

The title, in eastern Austrian dialect, means 'commotion' or 'confusion'. The ten players in saxophonist Nagl's ensemble, however, are tightly steered through a programme resembling the soundtrack to an imaginary movie. There's an air of pastiche to this calculated mix of staged cabaret jauntiness, smouldering indulgence and slick efficiency. Contrived Latin dance rhythms erupt from atmospheres of pinched restraint. Aloofness collapses into melancholy. Urbanity veers into farce. Accordion and some piano, strings including two basses and Noël Akchoté's guitar, muted trumpet, saxophone and percussion carry the swings of mood and changes of scene.

RICHARD NUNNS & EVAN PARKER RANGIRUA

LEO 314 CD

Parker's voracious appetite for challenging and unfamiliar contexts here leads him to New Zealand and an encounter with traditional Maori instruments sounded by Nunns. The event was the 1999 Wellington International Jazz Festival. The music is quiet, gentle and mysterious, subordinating the saxophonist's formidable technique to the requirements of ritualistic performance. Nunns's resources include gourds,

bullroarers, wooden and conch-shell trumpets and a bone flute. His creativity necessarily occurs within narrow limits, often to spellbinding ends. In response, Parker concentrates freedom to a pinpoint to complete this singular music.

ROSWELL RUDD & ARCHIE SHEPP

LIVE IN NEW YORK

EMARCY/SOUNDSCAPE 013482 CD

The eternal recurrence of the New Thing brings back the tenor and trombone of the grizzled leaders with a quintessential supporting cast: Reggie Workman (bass), Andrew Cyrille (drums), Grachan Moncur III (trombone) and Rudd's ex-New York Art Quartet colleague Amiri Baraka (words). Recorded live in New York last autumn, the years have softened the players' craggy exuberance, but there's still passion and commitment beneath the polish of maturity.

SATLAH EXODUS

TZADIK TZ7149 CD

Satlah's first album appeared last year under the name of Danny Zamir, a phenomenal Israeli altoist then only 19. This live recording, made in New York last November, confirms him as a total musician, fusing technique and passion in graceful, exhilarating solos. He's equally at ease on soprano. Bassist Shanir Ezra Blumenkranz and drummer Kevin Zubek run off the same inspirational circuit. Zamir has drawn lessons from Ornette Coleman's reckless inventiveness and David Sanborn's expressive imperatives, but his saturated jazz awareness is also shaped by improvising strands within Jewish culture. Zamir is an unflaggingly exciting new voice.

ALAN SILVA & THE SOUND VISIONS ORCHESTRA VISIONS

EREMITE MTE026 CD

Silva keeps the faith, putting his thunderous juggernaut ensemble through its turbulent swirling paces. Sleeve notes come from Marion Brown's writings on John Coltrane, and the aspirational surge of Ascension reverberates through *Visions*. Silva played bass on Albert Ayler's tribute to Coltrane. Now he favours synthesizer and conduction, leaving Wilbur Morris to anchor the brass and reeds. Soloists include JD Parran, Raphe Malik and Kidd Jordan. The technical difficulties of the recording can't conceal the sheer weight of the piece.

JAMES 'BLOOD' ULMER BLUE BLOOD

INNERHYTHMIC INR005 CD

At times Ulmer still glances back to his days with Ornette Coleman, but his preference has long been to serve up lashes of guitar and wisps of flute against chunks of funk and viscous blues. With Bill Laswell on bass, Jerome Brailey on drums and the keyboards of Bernie Worrell and Amina Claudine Myers, that's what you get here. But Ulmer's voice can't squeeze the emotional trigger, and the material doesn't match the best of his earlier recordings. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

LUIGI ARCHETTI & BO WIGET

LOW TIDE DIGITALS

RUNE GRAMMOFON RCD2019 CD

Swiss sound scientists Luigi Archetti and Bo Wiget ride a vibe that takes them way beyond Ambient into contemporary classical music. That dimension is partly defined by Wiget's cello playing and Archetti's arched guitar style, but their masterful and sparing application of electronics is also an important consideration. This fusion of the mechanical and the organic is sensual, thrilling and mysteriously moving.

BOURBONESE QUAKE

ON UNCERTAINTY

KORM PLASTICS KP3003 CD

The opening track of UK Industrial veterans Bourbonese Quake's new album serves as a reminder of their early potency. It's a full-on, Ballardian crash symphony, spiked with shards of jagged static and bad TV channel quick change overload. No sooner has its violent storm passed than BQ lead us into gentler, yet no less emotionally complex soundtrack zones, replete with Orff-like percussion exercises, dark angel chorus lines and electronic pulsebeats. Although there's nothing particularly phenomenal to report here, *On Uncertainty* shows that, nearly 20 years down the line, the group have never stopped inching towards their own definition of excellence.

CHRIS BROWN

TALKING DRUM

SONORE SON 15 CD

FUZZYBUNNY

FUZZYBUNNY

SONORE SON 14 CD

For *Talking Drum* Chris Brown travelled to Cuba and Indonesia, armed with a DAT recorder and a binaural microphone fixed to his Raybans. Out in the field he captured a store of Afro-Cuban and Balinese rhythms, which he later downloaded onto four laptop computers as part of an interactive installation project. Essentially it allowed players and audience to contribute to his original sonic travelogue. Although the added layers of electronic scratch and scrape and various other musical interventions are the point of *Talking Drum* as an installation, Brown's

original field recordings are the more absorbing element. Once rescued from the trap of his own invention, these recordings take on a life of their own, transporting the listener to other worlds. The rest seems superfluous by comparison.

For Fuzzybunny, Brown is joined by fellow electronic improvisors Tim Perkins and Scot Gresham-Lancaster for a live meltdown of the senses. Again, microphones are deployed 'for ambience'. Fuzzybunny's initial abrasiveness soon mellows into a funpacked free for all, where Buddy Holly and smooth jazz samples wrap round the trio's vocoder-treated voices, making them sound like the Teletubbies mimicking Peter Frampton. It's a 'joke' that wears thin soon enough, however, leaving Fuzzybunny exposed as a trio of smartarses sitting behind their expensive electronic boxes of tricks with nothing to say.

THE LAND OF NOD

MONT VENTOUX

SILBER D15 CD

The Cheltenham based Land Of Nod return with a third (mini-) LP of simply strummed mood pieces, delicately ornamented with minimalist bass and drum patterns. The group have been compared to Neu! but here they owe more to the hanging mists of Popul Vuh during the latter's golden Herzog soundtrack period. The inclusion of spoken word fragments only enhances the illusion that The Land Of Nod are rooted in some Bavarian forest, rather than the garden suburbia of their hometown. Stripped of frills and posturing, their music gently breathes in your ear, urging you to dream.

LIONEL MARCHETTI

KNUD UN NOM DE SERPENT
(LE CERCLE DES ENTRAILLES)
INTRATITIV INT014 CD

LIONEL MARCHETTI & JEROME NOETINGER

MORT AUX VACHES
STAALPLAAT NO NUMBER CD

MARCHETTI/VOICE CRACK/ NOETINGER DOUBLE_WASH

GROB 318 CD

Like Chris Brown, musique concrète composer Lionel Marchetti combines field recordings –

from Asia and Africa, in his case – and electronics to create an aural sensurround of the imagination. For *Knud Un Nom De Serpent* (*Le Cercle Des Entrailles*), Marchetti focuses on shamanism, hallucination and other modes and traditions of mind expansion and alteration.

Working spoken text, ritual and found recordings into his composition, Marchetti unlocks a secret part of his inner psyche for the delectation of his audience. The scrambling, wing fluttering and frighteningly freaky electronic collage gets under the skin and goes beyond sound and noise to reveal man's long dormant spirituality – and long suppressed traces of animalism. An astonishing work.

On *Mort Aux Vaches*, a subdued electronic sound battle versus fellow *musique concrète* composer Jérôme Noettinger, Marchetti exercises his improvisational side. Like two fighting DJs, only not so rough, Marchetti and Noettinger build towering cathedrals of static around each other, magically spilling gloriously abstract anthems out of their collection of speakers, microphones, tape recorders, toys and CD players. In a world where electronic music has become the standardised norm, the duo succeed in reminding you why you were initially attracted to it.

On *Double_Wash*, Marchetti and Noettinger are joined by Swiss duo Voice Crack. The extra hands don't necessarily make it more immediately fascinating. Even so, it contains enough shocks to keep you jumping. Voice Crack goad the two electroacoustic improvisors into harsher territory. The natural fluidity of the *Mort Aux Vaches* disc here gives way to a grittier, urban flow of industrialised electronics and firework storming.

CHRISTOF MIGONE

QUIETING

ALIEN8 ALIEN25 CD

As its title implies, the fourth solo recording from this Canadian conceptual sound artist is minimal in the extreme. Yet, separated by slabs of stony silence, its isolated sound events acquire a quite unnerving dramatic aspect. Turning on the noise of a cannon being fired, its single shot causes one unprepared bystander to shriek with surprise. It is no less shocking when it

unexpectedly goes off again like a bomb in your living room, causing a ripple of panic and a rush of adrenalin before it is once again swallowed up in silence. Except now that it is charged with fearful anticipation, that silence no longer feels so comforting.

MONSTRE

SUCRE 3

ALIEN8 ALIEN24 CD

Monstre is Montréal sound artist Philippe Lambert, whose compositions are mostly voice-based and layered with a variety of electronic effects, toy instruments, obsolete drum machines and samplers. His obsession with the Japanese noise scene is pushed to the fore here. The likes of Masonna, Jojo Hiroshige's Slapp Happy Humphrey and The Boredoms fit like barely concealed shadows throughout the project. That said, Monstre is nobody's clone. Whatever it is leaping out of the speakers at you refuses to be fully identified as belonging to any genre or musical activity. Playful one minute and sonically terrifying the next, Lambert's forever metamorphosing creation might go through completely unpredictable moodswings, but the ride is exciting and the music is very much alive.

MUSLIMGAUZE

ABU-DIS

DOR ADOR2357 CD

Rumours persist that the late Bryn Jones aka Muslimgauze can't be dead but only sleeping. Well, death has done little to slow down the phenomenal release rate of unheard Muslimgauze material. This time round, his spirit is resurrected through a double set of Muslimgauze remixes by the likes of Talvin Singh, Pearl, Moondogg, Spooncurve and Makyo/Bill Laswell. For those who have never fully got to grips with his vast back catalogue, this compilation of past collaborations could well be the 'access all areas' pass you've been waiting for. Here Moroccan street market samples jostle for space with Techno, big beats and densely packed electronic glitching to create an absorbing new digital Esperanto. The resulting aural hallucinations come across like a Jack Smith film for the ears. □



Ether Talk

Dispatches from the digital domain. At May's Cybersalon Net.Music conference in London, French political economist Jaques Attali declared that the Internet allows noise's war on music to continue by other means. Below is an edited transcript



Jacques Attali, author of *Noise* (1977). Speaking at the ICA, London, May 2001

I wrote *Noise* in 1977, and still today I try to explain that it's impossible to look at music, or any other form of human endeavour, when you put it outside of the global context. Of course, music is very specific for a number of reasons. One economic reason is that music is pure information. In economics, information is a devil – it's impossible to manage. For example, the whole of economic theory is the theory of scarce resources. If milk is freely available, then the price of milk is down; if milk is scarce, the price is up: this is economic theory. But it doesn't work for music; it doesn't work for information as a whole. If I have a pot of milk, and I give it to you, I don't have it anymore. But if I give you a piece of information I still have it, I keep it. Which means that if I have something and I give it to you, I create something new: abundance. And this means that economic theory doesn't work for information, when that information can be separated from its material support – a CD, or whatever is the case today.

When I have something that is scarce, its value is linked to the fact that it is scarce, and that it belongs to me and nobody else. In an information economy, something has more value when a lot of people have it. For example, if I am the only one to have a telephone, it doesn't mean anything, not if there is no one else to call.

If I am the only person to speak a particular language, its value is zero, because I cannot speak to anyone else. In info theory, the value of something increases with the number of people sharing it. It's why we must be very careful, when we speak about music, not to have in mind the main economic laws.

But there are also other reasons why we cannot rely on economics to understand music. Every human activity has a history, and it is a history that existed before economics, when things had a value that was not a price. So if you want to understand something's value, you must try to understand what its value was before it was given a price. This is true for everything. It is only when you have found what is the value, what is the role, what is the function of something before it had a price that you understand why it can be considered to have a value in economics, why it still has a value even today.

What is the value of music in precapitalist society? In my view, music is a metaphor for the management of violence. When people listen to music, they listen to the fact that society is possible: because we can manage violence. If violence is not managed, then society collapses. The only way for individuals to survive is for violence to be channelled or tamed. In

"When people talk about 'pirates', we should remember that the music industry is the biggest pirate of all"

anthropology, it can be explained that the best way to manage violence requires us to accept the two following hypotheses.

One: We are violent only when we have the same kinds of desire as the other person, and we become rivals. Two: The way to manage violence in society is to organise differences – not inequalities – between people, in order that they do not desire the same thing, and through the channelling of violence by the creation of scapegoats. Scapegoats are a crucial element in the organisation of a society. They are somebody or something which must be hated, and also admired. Without them society is impossible, because violence is everywhere.

What's the relationship between that and music? If you look at music as a way of organising differences among noises, then you have music as a metaphor for the organising of scapegoats. Noise is violence, it is killing. Organising noises, creating differences in noises, is a way of demonstrating that violence can be transformed into a way of managing violence. And this is true everywhere. In thousands of myths there are relations between violence and noise; music and peace; musicians and scapegoats; music and relationship to gods; dance and religious ceremony. In every case they represent the same thing: trying to find a way to

organise possible life in society.

Music is prophetic. Why? If we consider music to be a kind of code, we can see that there are many different ways of organising that code: different melodies, different rhythms, different genres. Moreover, we can explore these different forms of organisation much more easily, much more rapidly, than we can explore different ways of organising reality.

Music is just one element in the management of violence, and there are different stages in this. The first and longest stage in the history of mankind was through religion. We may say it began at least 15,000 years ago. Music didn't exist as an art – for art didn't exist. Music, dance, prayer, daily life were exactly the same; everything was alive, everything had a spiritual dimension. In this world, music was an expression of God, as well as a way to speak to God. It's what I call music linked to sacrifice or ritual.

The Bible is the first sacred book in which music is said not to come from gods, but having been invented by men. It is presented as a human way of managing violence, and from Babylon to Egypt, the Greek and Roman and Chinese empires, we see the appropriation of 'sacred' or 'holy' powers by emperors, that is, by men. It is the beginning of division of labour,

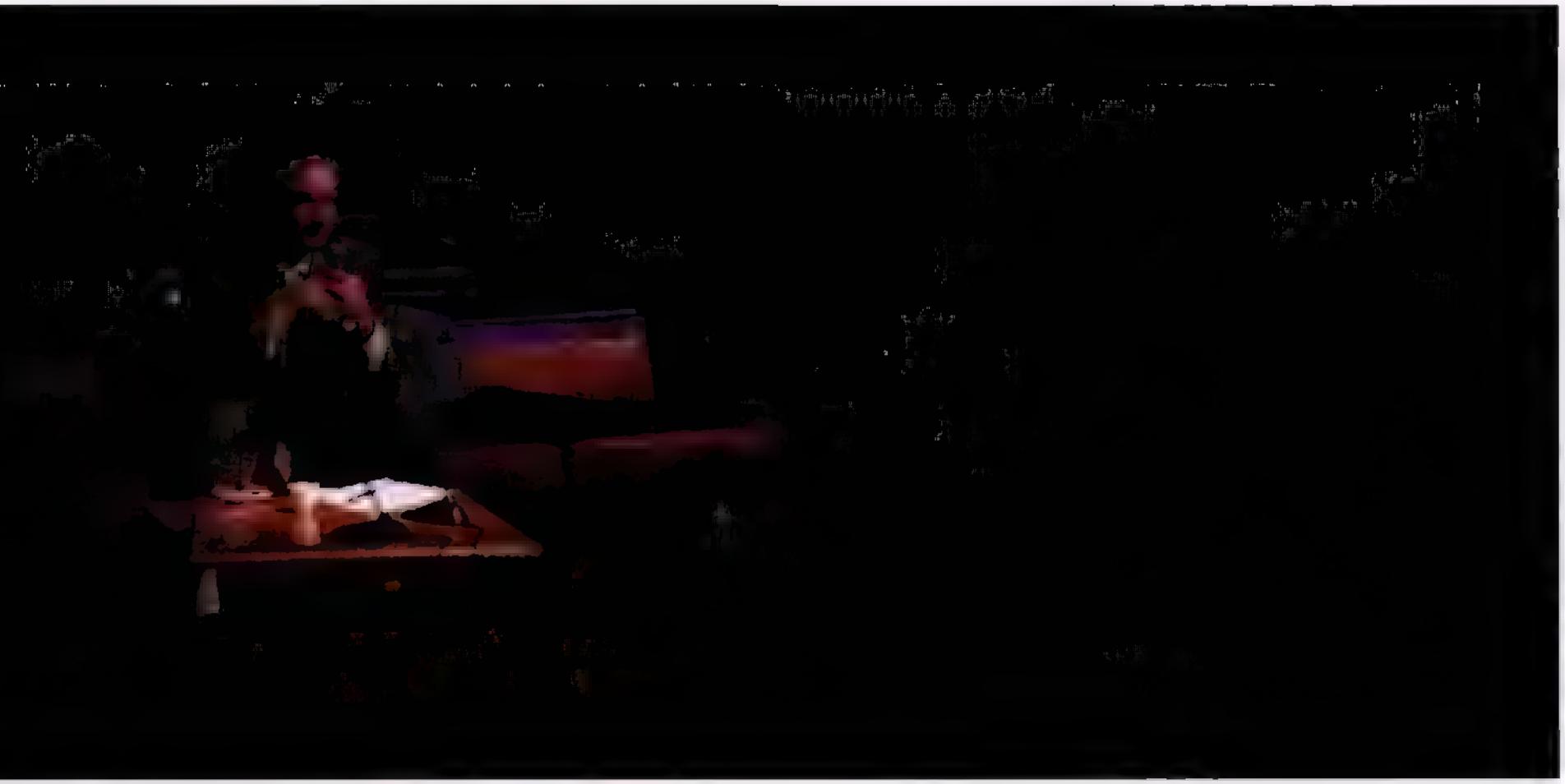


PHOTO: KOSTAS PANOURAS

particularly between the three main powers – religion, the arts and the military – in which each plays a role in the management of violence. Music is beginning to become increasingly important in this management process, and remains so right through the Middle Ages.

The real change occurred when a new means of managing violence appears: money. There was another way of managing violence, and another way of managing violence through music. More people wanted to be part of society, so it became impossible to tame violence through the old model. Where an 'elite' form of music existed, it was in the courts, in the company of the king. But then a new group of money managers emerged in the form of the middle classes, the bourgeoisie, the shopkeepers. They wanted access to music but were too numerous and not in a position to finance musicians full time. Thus emerged the public performance. What's interesting is that not only does this begin to organise music economically – people would put on a concert and others would buy tickets – but that new styles and new instruments begin to have an aesthetic impact, such as the symphony and the sonata. This is what I see as a period characterised by representation. All this is linked to the fact that

there is an increased number of patrons for whom the musician can work, but also because music was being used as a representation of power. Patrons were there to show one another that they are the new elite, that they are powerful.

This developed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and then you have a whole new form of music appearing, linked to the need of developing a representational economy, leading not just to stars – individuals – but to large orchestras of 50 to 100 people... and ultimately the conductor. What is the conductor? He is someone who tames the orchestra, but also someone who is demonstrating to the audience that it is possible to tame the orchestra – we see one of us taming the workers, organising the division of labour, avoiding violence and creating harmony.

At the end of the 19th century, as the burgeoning middle classes began to consolidate their position within society, it was not enough for music to be confined to the concert hall – it had become impossible to give access to music to all those that wanted it. By the way, it is here that music begins to develop an economic value in the form of copyright. What is important to understand is that copyright is not property right. Copyright is given during the lifetime of the

musician, and to some extent, that of their children – it's limited. This means that music has never been accepted as being the property of the musician. Copyright exists to finance his life, but not as property in itself, such as a car. So, to continue: at the end of the 19th century, it was necessary to create another way of organising music, in order to allow more people access to that music. It was time to invent the gramophone. The gramophone was needed because it was impossible to build enough concert houses for the hundreds of thousands of people who were in a position to buy music.

There was a need to create a means of having a private concert, because this was the only way to accommodate all those in a financial position to access music. Actually, there were two ways, which would go on to influence one another throughout the 20th century. Firstly, there was the gramophone – the concert without limit. And secondly there was radio, which would pose exactly the same problems as the Internet does today, in that it offered free music.

Thus began what I see as the third stage after ritual and representation – namely repetition, beginning at the end of the 19th century. What is interesting here is that music begins to be seen as something that can be stored, and then copied and copied and copied. The gramophone

exists before television, before the car industry, before you have a society characterised by mass consumption. Once again, music was a prophecy, not only in the technological terms that facilitated the production of more music for more people, but also, once again, in terms of style. One of the first styles to emerge in this new era was jazz, which is itself predicated on repetition. And after that, of course, the whole 'scientific' or 'theoretical' approach to music, also characterised by repetition, that was taken by people like Stravinsky, Ravel, Boulez, Stockhausen, Reich and Glass. It was a way of reproducing stylistically what was happening technologically. Today, the music industry faces yet another problem, in that there are limits to the amount of music that they can sell to people. Why? Because there are physical limits to the amount of music that people can store at home, even if you miniaturise the sales format – CD, DVD, or whatever. It's simply too much, it takes too much space. There is an economic need to facilitate greater storage within a smaller physical space. What is required is a kind of 'virtual music'.

I think we may be entering a fourth era, one which will not replace repetition, just as repetition did not replace representation, and representation did not replace ritual. For instance, we still attend



the types of concert that emerged during the representational period. There are a number of points to consider here. Firstly, when people talk about 'pirates', we should remember that the music industry is the biggest pirate of all, and has been from the very beginning. Who created the possibility of duplicating and distributing music, if not the record industry itself? You will find the same thing happening at each stage of the technology's evolutionary development – the record industry shoots itself in the foot. One arm is producing music and complaining that technology is making it easier to steal that music, while the other arm is producing the very technology that it claims to be damaging its interests. This was true for cassettes, this was true for CDs, and it is true again for the Internet. Napster is of marginal importance here. Gnutella or Aimster were born within the industry. Both

But there are roughly one billion MP3 files in circulation on the Internet, and this figure increases by around 100 million each month. The question is whether it is possible to tame this kind of thing, whether it is possible to put the genie back in the bottle. In answer to this, I propose three scenarios. Two scenarios see us remain in a repetitive era, in which we try to treat digital file formats as if they were physical commodities. In one of these, the majors win. They would have to rely on effective cryptography to prevent duplication of music; also necessary would be the destruction of all MP3 files or, at the very least, control over the production of the devices that play digital file formats. This is rather similar to the approach taken by the industry when trying to shift consumers from vinyl records to CD. So it is possible that the industry will begin to produce devices that are

totalitarian society.

The second scenario is one in which the majors are not in a position to do it, but where artists will want to do it and will do it. Artists will say, 'I don't want to be rewarded only for selling the T-shirt.' There will be a fight – Courtney Love is famous for that – but I think a lot of artists would fight against the majors and try to organise the selling of their own music. I think this has a chance to work for the major artist, for the specialised artist, but this is not going to help the main global thing.

The third thing, which, of the three, I think has the best chance of succeeding, is what I would call the 'potlatch scenario', where people will exchange music just for the pleasure of actually giving. This is, of course, how MP3.com originally started, where people posted their music as amateurs, not as professionals. There are two directions in which this scenario could develop. Firstly, if repetition proves to be enough to tame music, we might witness the emergence of what has been called 'cultural capitalism'. And as I have said, information does not conform to normal economic rules that rely on scarcity.

But technology can be used to create artificial scarcity, so that cultural goods can be bought and sold like any other commodity. At the same time, one way of utilising actual scarcity might be to maintain a focus on live entertainment. If I look at the final of a soccer world championship, it is an entirely different experience to watch it live than it is to watch it two hours later, when you already know the result. You don't need any technology in order to be able to sell a live event, because the value lies in the fact that you absolutely cannot know how it will end. A live concert in many ways is not a live event, because you have an idea of what is going to happen – unless it is totally improvised. So we can imagine cultural capitalism emphasising live events which are either totally improvised, or for which a conclusion cannot be forecast.

However, if I am correct when I say that repetition will not be enough to tame music in the future, a fourth stage in the evolution of music may emerge, which I call 'composition'.

The future is no longer to listen to music, but to play it. It is different from everything that I have mentioned before. As a theorist, I have to say that composition would be done first and foremost for ourselves, for each of us, for the simple pleasure of making music. This is significant not only because you do it outside of the economy, for your own personal enjoyment, but because the only person listening to the piece is the same person playing it. It lies primarily outside of communication. And, stylistically, this is important because, as any musician will tell you, what we like to play is often not the same as what we like to listen to.

The tools of composition will be tools that are linked to the body: prostheses. Certainly we can use sexual metaphors here: the first characteristic of composition would be masturbatory. Of course, this would be just one element of the compositional act, followed closely by the need to share with another. It says in the Bible: 'You should love others as you do yourself.' I have always understood this to mean that it is impossible to like others if you don't like yourself first. Of course, the market economy may try to distort composition, to reorganise it in its own image. For example, I am fascinated by the recent work of Paul Allen. As a fan of Jimi Hendrix, he has created a museum in Seattle in which you can simulate the sensation of appearing as Jimi Hendrix live on stage, complete with applause at the end. I am sure this is going to develop as a kind of market-led recreation of composition, where you will simulate being an artist with a simulated audience. Nevertheless, the real pleasure of composition would exist outside of the market economy, just for the fun of it, where violence is rechannelled through creation. For when I create something, and I then give it to you, I may have a chance of living in your memory forever. □

Transcript by Niki Gomez. A completely revised edition of Noise has just been republished in French by Fayard. Jacques Attali's Website is at www.attali.com. An online archive of the Cybersalon conference, with audio files of the other talks, is at www.cybersalon.org

"There are physical limits to the amount of music that people can store at home. It's simply too much, it takes too much space"

came out of AOL and they escaped like a virus that escapes a laboratory. They try to prevent it, but they can't.

The second point to bear in mind is that we must make distinctions between three different types of copying. If I copy something for my own personal use, it is not illegal. Secondly, if I make a copy to give as a gift to another person, that too is not illegal, and this right is upheld across any number of formats, from CD to cassette to DVD. Interestingly, legislation exists that attempts to make it illegal, for the first time in mankind's history, for me to make such a gift over the Internet... which means that it will not work. The third type of copying, namely the mass duplication of music for sale or profit, is clearly illegal.

incompatible with the MP3 format. This is certainly the approach that the industry is taking at the moment, but to my mind this will not work. It would require legislative support, and it would need to be policed worldwide. It would have to install a system for monitoring email traffic on a global scale, to ensure that no MP3 files were being sent or received. Moreover, it would probably require the industry to control what kind of music was played in a live concert or rave party, or what have you. Most significantly, any monitoring system would inevitably be used not just to check for signs of illegal music, but for wider surveillance as well. My bet is that such a system will not work. But if it does, music will be a prophecy of nothing less than a future

Go To:

If inspired rants and DIY theory rock your boat, then make straight for Situationist/anarchist zine **Not Bored** (www.notbored.org), an online archive of the magazine's paper version. Beside mentioning Jacques Attali and William Burroughs, it has interesting tidbits on Antonin Artaud, an article called "No More Fucking Ugly Buildings" by NYC Psychogeographers' Association, as well as public hate mail to British writer Stewart Home.

If you are willing to dip your toe into the deep dark Void Beyond of postmodern theory, you'll find plenty at **Ctheory** (www.ctheory.com). Edited by Canadian Data Trash writers Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, who once made a CD with Scanner, the site is a journal of theory, technology and culture containing plenty of essays with titles like "Spatial Discursions: Flames Of The Digital And Ashes Of The Real". Also included are features by individuals such as

DJ Spooky and our very own Ken Hollings.

Now that your appetite for sound theory has been whetted, here are two print journals from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) containing dabblings in music theory, digital culture and technology. **Computer Music** (mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Computer-Music-Journal/), with writings by the likes of microsound composer Kim Cascone and Joel Chadabe (author of the essential *Electric Sound*), contains some articles, but you'll have to get hold of the printed journal to read most of it. **Leonardo Music Journal** (mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/Lmj/sound.html), edited by electroacoustician Nicolas Collins, is one sound focused part of a larger Leonardo journal of arts and technology. **Soundsite** (autonomous.org/soundsite/) is an online journal of "Sound Theory, Philosophy of Sound and Sound Art". Containing interviews with DJ Spooky (again) and radio's Rev Dwight Frizzel, reviews and essays, Soundsite not only offers a healthy theoretical backbone, but also acts as a departure area for online sound projects.

At **Laudanum** (laudanum.net), you'll find a rhizomatic jungle of links to various sonic art and Net art areas, as well as a portal to various Net radio hotspots. An essay on Italian Futurism and Luigi Russolo's original *Art Of Noises* treatise (cadre.sjsu.edu/switch/sound/articles/wendt/folder6/ng632.htm) is part of the **Switch** zine created at San Jose University, which also contains a good stock of images.

For refreshingly politicised thinking, check out the site for LA sound activists **Ultra-red** (www.comatose.com/ultrared). The site is part of Terre Thaemlitz's Comatose empire and, namedropping theorists such as Attali, Deleuze & Guattari, Russolo, etc, it makes for compelling scanning. If you feel so inclined to wear your politics on your sleeve (or chest), go get ultrachic Karl Marx-inspired T-shirts from the related site **Sanriot** (www.sanriot.com), with themes such as 'Hello Karl' (in Hello Kitty style), and Badtz Marukusu (aka Japanese cartoon character Bad Batsmaru) in terrorist guise.

ANNE HILDE NESET



Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



King of the road: Elvis Presley

AMERICA'S MUSICAL LIFE

RICHARD CRAWFORD

NORTON HBK £30

BY ANDY HAMILTON

It has not been unusual for histories of American music to cover folk, pop and classical side by side, but Richard Crawford's massive volume, weighing in at nearly 900 dense pages, is unique in its aspiration and authority. This is a history with a strong conceptual and aesthetic drive, which makes it deeper and more readable than the work of other eminent American music historians such as Eileen Southern. Crawford himself has already written ten books on the subject, but *America's Musical Life* must be his crowning achievement.

His main premise is that music in America has evolved from an interplay of classical, popular and traditional spheres – or between what he calls "composer's music" and "performer's music". But 19th century prejudices inherited from Europe weren't much help when it came to assessing music created in the recording studio, or the emotional depth and sophistication of Frank Sinatra's 50s concept albums, which were largely carved from standard Tin Pan Alley repertoire and showtunes. Jazz critics had already begun to judge recordings less as documents of an authentic musical performance and more as musical works in their own right, and the practice was continued by rock critics in the 60s.

Crawford examines the aesthetic implications of the 19th century divide between classical and popular music, or music in the 'cultivated' and 'vernacular' traditions. He separates a third sphere, the traditional, and contrasts Europe with America, which has lacked the church-, court- and state-backed authority that sanctioned an aesthetic hierarchy. The "musical democracy" of bandleaders such as Pat Gilmore, who wrote the popular Civil War song "When Johnny Comes Marching Home", is contrasted with growing elitism surrounding European concert music. From the 1870s, orchestras became agents of artistic ritual attesting to the superiority of composer's music. Though Crawford aims at least for a value-free description here, it may be that evaluation is inescapable from the outset.

Patrotic bandleader John Philip Sousa, composer of "The Stars And Stripes Forever", took up this hierarchy of values. In 1899, he described how he made a syncopated tune respectable: "We play a common street melody with just as much care... I have washed its face, put a clean dress on it... It is now an attractive thing, entirely different from the frowzy-headed thing of the gutter." Sousa was part of the growing patriotic surge from the 1890s that venerated the flag, fanning the subsequent debate over what constituted American music. A fascinating chapter discusses the claims of

Edward MacDowell as a national composer – he wrote "To A Wild Rose", the unlikely basis for a classic improvisation by Sonny Rollins.

Nearly 500 pages pass before the book enters the 20th century, but its compelling earlier chapters essentially illuminate the later ones. A chapter on the very separate tradition of Native American music is dispassionate but moving. Others follow on Southern Devotional Music, Slave Songs and Spirituals, Minstrelsy and Stephen Foster, Parlor Songs, and the musical legacy of Puntanism. In the 20th century, Crawford covers Tin Pan Alley, ragtime and the Jazz Age, as well as classical music. There are excellent chapters on Country music and its progeny, in which he roots Anglo-American traditions in the South. Establishing the American century's pattern of innovation, discovery and commercial exploitation, he examines the consequences of show business going Country in the 20s: "Claims for the purity of even the oldest songs could no longer be maintained, for recordings and radio broadcasts were now part of the process of transmission and selection." Bluegrass was "a modern representation of Appalachian folk music, reconstituted for the concert stage" – "a sort of Southern mountain Dixieland", according to folk revivalist Alan Lomax.

Jazz is a central thread of the 20th century story. Crawford is selective in his treatment, and

he's more original on Louis Armstrong than on Duke Ellington and Count Basie. He illuminates those black-white interactions that worked to white economic advantage – ragtime and Irving Berlin, jazz and Paul Whiteman, R&B and Presley -- whereas he interprets the rise of rock 'n' roll as a challenge to segregation. Sam Phillips, producer of Elvis Presley's first recordings, was conscious that "Southern [youngsters] especially felt a resistance to [R&B] that even they probably didn't quite understand", and he sought white performers who could sing black. Earlier chapters had already established a central theme in the remarkable continuity in African-American music from earliest times – call and response, heterophony, blue notes and a rock-steady pulse were all elements of the ring dances transplanted from Africa. The story is brought up to the present day, with understandably compressed accounts of minimalism, rap and HipHop – the product, Crawford argues, of South Bronx de-industrialisation and urban renewal.

America's Musical Life is a magnificent achievement, extraordinarily even-handed across musical genres. Its conceptual slant inevitably leaves holes in the history – free jazz is neglected, Cecil Taylor and Albert Ayler go unmentioned, and film music is mostly glossed over. But though his stance is dispassionate, the author's love for the music shines through. □

SERGE GAINSBOURG: A FISTFUL OF GITANES

SYLVIE SIMMONS
HELTER SKELTER PBK £12.99

BY ANDY MEDHURST

Pornographic prankster or subversive sage? That Serge Gainsbourg was both – neither and most of all either – makes him a tempting subject for a biographer. Sylvie Simmons's lively, informed and shrewd account of his life and impact is by no means the first attempt to unravel the man's complexities, and it leaves enough spaces and questions to ensure that it won't be anything like the last. Like too many of the pop/rock life stories published by Helter Skelter, it isn't immune from undemanding fan-level celebration, but it does at least make some welcome moves towards placing Gainsbourg in his assorted contexts, rather than treating him as some sort of isolated maverick genius.

The book's great strength is the richness of its interview material. Simmons has not only talked to those who worked with Gainsbourg (Marianne Faithfull, Sly & Robbie, Jane Birkin, among

others), but also sought reflections from those who, sometimes a tad self-admiringly, see themselves as working in traditions instituted by him, including Air, MC Solaar and Beck. The book diligently, though not always straightforwardly, maps the ripples of influence emanating from Gainsbourg. This makes for an intriguing cartography, suggesting lines of connection and reverberation that only a figure as multifaceted and studiously perverse as Gainsbourg could hold (loosely) together. Hence Sonic Youth and Françoise Hardy, Jimmy Somerville and Brigitte Bardot, Momus and John Zorn all sit somewhere in the vicinity of his jester-like, suggestive fallout.

Simmons's inclination is to privilege the amassing of facts over the risking of analysis. She tends to chronicle rather than deconstruct, though that's no doubt a pragmatic move, given the conventions of the pop/rock biography and the audience it serves. And as chronicles go, this is an assured and meticulous one. Simmons invariably leaves critical insights to her interviewees, resulting in a patchwork view of

Gainsbourg rather than a single coherent analytical line. Indeed, the book reads at times like the transcript of a radio documentary.

But it's probably foolish to expect a doctoral thesis in a text like this. The range of voices Simmons has collated usefully covers his contradictions and slipperiness, perhaps. The only time it rankles is around the vexed question of sexual politics. You might have expected a female critic to look a little more closely at Gainsbourg's compulsion for sexual scandal, but that crucial element of his persona is mostly just documented. The positive side of such a decision is that the reader is left to decide, but more negatively the book might be seen as colluding with Gainsbourg's cultivated façade of bohemian bed athlete, a caricature from which he emerges as little more than a figurehead for retro sexist, bachelor pad sensibilities – Pepe Le Pew with an ear for a tune.

However, a more interesting, convoluted image of the man's attitudes to gender and sexuality begins to surface from the interviews with Jane Birkin, who lived with Gainsbourg for 12 years

and duetted with him on the infamous UK Number One hit "Je T'Aime (Moi Non Plus)". She paints a picture of a man caught between public reputation and private insecurities (he slept with several legendarily beautiful actresses, but never let any of them see him completely naked), with herself as an uneasy mixture of muse, co-conspirator and object of obsession. Illuminating though these insights are, they bring us no nearer to the man's music. And that's the real hole in books of this kind – for all that they have to say about fame and image, for all the narrating of life story and gestures at psychology, they rarely stray into considering the meaning of the music itself. That isn't said to advocate some dusty, form-crazed, context-shunning musicology, especially in this case, since Gainsbourg was never only a musician but a real cultural polymath who played the celebrity game with sly vigour and semi-detached intensity. But there are times, reading this book, when it could be about a TV star or a journalist. It's a great read, but what a shame there's so little said about the sounds the man made. □

MILES BEYOND: THE ELECTRIC EXPLORATIONS OF MILES DAVIS 1967-1991

PAUL TINGEN
BILLBOARD PBK £18.95

BY HUA HSU

Just when you thought every possible variation on Miles Davis's name had been done, Paul Tingen comes up with a new one. *Miles Beyond* is a compelling read that uses previously available sources to explore Davis's 1967-1991 electric explorations in refreshing new ways. Though Tingen has managed to find some of the least flattering photos ever taken of Miles, his analysis is an effective blend of musicology, fly on the wall social history and slavish, fanboy praise.

A refreshing aspect of Tingen's approach is that he hears Miles Davis with rock ears. In the introduction, he recalls his teenage years in the 1970s, when he was far more interested in King Crimson and Henry Cow than King Oliver or Stanley Cowell. Though it would take him 15 years to track down the musical shard on the radio that first attracted him to Davis ("Gemini/Double Image" from *Live-Evil*), the teenaged Tingen got hold of a copy of *Agharta* and became a Miles worshipper for all the 'wrong' reasons. After all, who starts with *Agharta*?

But it is those same 'wrong' rock ears that allow him to recognise the importance of

guitarist Pete Cosey, or linger on the production techniques of Teo Macero and Bill Laswell. Tingen sees beauty and progress in things that purist jazz critics and even fellow Davis fans denounce. He treats the rock and funk flourishes tenderly, providing perspectives on the 'electric Miles' question that most jazzbos probably wouldn't know how to ask.

An interesting strain running through the book is Tingen's tendency to fit his subject within pre-existing belief or philosophical systems. Yet he makes Davis's philosophies appear more complicated than is probably necessary, with names like Kant and Lao Tzu popping up to lend 'genius' cred to Miles (in the sky). References to the author's own Zen beliefs are awkwardly frequent. However, the interdisciplinary parallels are occasionally illuminating, as when Tingen interprets the "art of forgetting" remarks that Davis once made to Eric Niesenson as an example of the Zen concept of 'beginner's mind'.

Tingen must largely rely on other people's interviews for material. It proves to be a pretty good strategy, for he mostly collects the voices of those on the margins of epic moments, the group members usually overlooked in the 'Great Men' reading of jazz history. John McLaughlin, Dave Holland and percussionist Mtume weigh in with insightful readings of the fruitful post-1968 period. The tiny, sometimes overlooked explanations for why Davis went electric are

revealing, ranging from an ongoing dispute with label boss Clive Davis to the inclusion of one-time Stevie Wonder bassist Michael Henderson. Meanwhile, the sparing use of Davis quotes keeps the book's focus on the musical, rather than the personal.

That said, Tingen is somewhat inconsistent in what he chooses to reveal of Davis's personal life. Perhaps the most obvious examples deal with the artist's continued struggles with drugs and his abusive relationships. By the book's end, you still have no idea what made Davis smile or lash out. The string of dysfunctional relationships – romantic and music-related – lack internal logic in this telling. The thing is, Tingen never blames Davis for anything. Of course not everyone who writes about him is obligated to go into the nasty stuff, but once you've brought up the subject of Davis's women and drugs, the reader might hope it's for a better reason than to show Miles coming through slaughter a bigger and better man. When Davis reflects remorsefully on the "disappointments" that were his two children, Tingen blithely reports the comment as though the father had no hand in the way they turned out. When he points out that Davis "regularly beat up some of the women he was with", he puts it down to the drugs he was taking to ease his battered body, gently concluding, "It was amazing that Miles could work with this degree of physical and emotional trouble, let

alone partake in creating music of often exceptionally high quality". No doubt the women on the receiving end thought Miles's genius was worth a few bruises, too.

Tingen paints Davis as a tortured artist for whom women and drugs were scourge-like temptations to be valiantly dodged on the way to somewhere greater, somewhere Zen. In contrast, American scholar Robin Kelley has recently penned a creative, challenging and highly controversial essay arguing for a view of Miles Davis as 'Pimp'. In Kelley's reading, Miles was a character perpetually posing and preening, a cool and seductive storyteller who manipulated (sometimes violently) the love others thrust upon him – a mack daddy for the ages, if you will, whose carnivorous psyche was every bit as contradictory and complicated as his music. When Tingen does bother to document the black and blues, he always closes the scene with Miles in the most pain, struggling to exorcise his demons. The accusation that previous biographers failed to correctly judge the man's internal psyche takes some gall when the author himself wilfully can't see that Miles Davis could be an asshole at times, just like everyone else. It's as if Tingen doesn't want to say anything bad about the man. Though his analysis of production minutiae and technique is unparalleled, his treatment of Miles's old problems breaks little new ground. □



Pawns in his game: Leonard Chess

SPINNING BLUES INTO GOLD: CHESS RECORDS, THE LABEL THAT LAUNCHED THE BLUES

NADINE COHODAS

AURUM PBK £14.99

BY BEN WATSON

When Polish refugees Lejor and Fisz, aged 11 and seven, disembarked from the steamship Mauretania with their mother Cyrla at Staten Island in 1928, they knew the names which their father, resident in Chicago since 1921, had picked for them: Leonard and Philip. He had already changed his own name, from Yasef Czy to Joseph Chess. The brothers grew up to give their last name to a record label that inspired The Rolling Stones and defined rock as a form. Yet Chess was originally set up to sell records to the black population of Chicago – any success in the pop charts was icing on the cake. The brothers issued gospel, sermons, stand-up comedy, doowop and jazz, but the amplified blues of Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf gave Chess its identity. In Etta James, Sugar Pie DeSanto, Fontella Bass and Koko Taylor, Chess discovered strong voices which directly challenged WASP stereotypes of femininity (dig deep into the Chess aesthetic, and it's not hard to find the kabbalistic sexual materialism David Bakan theorised as the progressive core of Freudian psychoanalysis). Whenever anyone thrills to the modernist primitivism of overdriven electric sound, they are responding to music originally unleashed by these two Jewish businessmen.

In a field riven with controversy – about commercial exploitation and racial prejudice, in particular – Nadine Cohodas's many interviews and painstaking research provide much badly-needed fact. Leonard Chess was the tough-talking frontman of the label, Phil his quieter partner. They originally started in the liquor

business in Chicago's 'black downtown'. Leonard's generous use of local expletives, particularly "motherfucker", was legendary. He drove hard bargains and hated parting with money, yet his musicians stayed loyal. Only Chuck Berry walked out – for a three-year sojourn with Mercury Records – but even he returned to the fold. Leonard's payments to the musicians were paternalist rather than by the book: crises (hospital fees, legal bills, bail payments) were taken care of, but royalty statements were irregular. A week after Leonard's death in 1973, a man in a suit and tie appeared on Etta James's doorstep, and handed her the deeds to her house. Concerned that her wild ways with liquor and drugs would ruin her, Leonard had been making the mortgage payments without telling her. The assumption was that, rather than being a moneyspinner in itself, a hit record established a musician's name: they then made money with live appearances. Tough on the musician, maybe, but the arrangement perhaps made for a more vital musical culture.

As civil rights and Black Power burgeoned in the 60s, Chess's paternalism came under attack. One reason for selling the company in 1968 was to avoid such charges. But while Leonard Chess was alive, he kept the musicians happy. After his death in 1973 – with the Chess back catalogue in the hands of GRT, All Platinum/Sugar Hill and finally Universal – musicians resented seeing their music everywhere with so little recompense. Sophisticated modern artists – plotting their sales forecasts and royalties on spreadsheet software – may have rid themselves of foul-talking, deal-making wiseguys, but by taking market rationality into the grain of their production, they also render their art beige and insipid. In contrast, Chess Records was a conduit for downhome, 'devil may care' blues: sessions were in-house and

spontaneous, like at Sun, making it the most prized label of the British Blues Boom.

Leonard had strong ideas about what would sell: he'd stamp on the floor to indicate the tempo he was after, hold up signs saying "more blues" to reticent bass players, but his input came from crude enthusiasm rather than calculation. Confronted with an "artsy fartsy" advertising image for his radio station WVON ("Voice Of the Negro"), Leonard took the designer (Rollin Binzer) on a tour of South Side bars and lounges, culminating with one patron who took the poster out to a backyard, climbed on a chair and urinated on it. Rock's ambivalence about the ways of the music business was brilliantly caught in Nic Roeg's *Performance*, with its disturbing cameo of Mick Jagger as a boardroom gangster: "Memo From Turner" was a fantasy based on Leonard Chess

As with Sam Phillips at Sun Records, accusations of racism are inappropriate. Leonard had a genuine regard for the musicians, or they wouldn't have stuck with him. The rumour that black musicians were not allowed to use the front door at Chess, or that Keith Richards discovered Muddy Waters in overalls, painting the walls at Chess studios, are, according to Cohodas, apocryphal stories designed to fit stereotypes of The Man. Chess was passionate about civil rights, donating money to the NAACP and local black churches. Radio WVON broadcast bitter complaints about the hosing of civil rights demonstrators in Alabama in 1963, and helped organise a one day school boycott about class sizes.

Cohodas's own father was a refugee who made it in America, and the subtext of this book is that minor league capitalism is not necessarily cruel and exploitative. But a certain conservatism is written into American success stories. When Martin Luther King was shot, Binzer supplied

Chess with a photograph of King standing in front of the stars and stripes, and ran an ad in *The Chicago Tribune* "in tribute to the memory of a great American". Leonard Chess did not welcome King's opposition to the war in Vietnam, and issued a comedy album by Bob Hope, a notorious hawk. His son Marshall, on the other hand, grew his hair, smoked pot and went psychedelic. After the not outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago in the summer of 1968, Marshall and Binzer issued an album called *Peace* with a picture of Santa Claus wounded and lying on the ground in Lincoln Park, a site where many demonstrators had been injured by police. The cover created a scandal, with many complaints, and caused *Billboard* to wade in with an anti-war editorial.

Occasionally, the account of deals and dollars becomes monotonous, and you wonder if the biography of an immigrant who made it in shoes or hosiery might not be equally interesting. However, because pop music is such a charged area for the formation of telling symbols, it's essential to keep these actualities in focus. Certainly, the competitive world of commerce has a different set of priorities from the 'nothing left to lose' verities of the downhome blues, and it's nothing short of amazing that Leonard Chess rode the contradictions for so long. After his death, deprived of the linchpin of his personality, the label fell apart. Perhaps surprising in view of some of the anti-Chess statements made by Muddy Waters, Cohodas describes him as weeping at the graveside: "It's all over, Leonard. It's just all over. There ain't no record company. No more nothin', Leonard." It wasn't the money, Chess insisted, it was "the game". For a brief period, expanding petty capitalism and progressive cultural politics linked forces, creating a template that has been often imitated, but never equalled. □



Crossing over or crossing back? Hendrix with Band Of Gypsies

CROSSTOWN TRAFFIC: JIMI HENDRIX AND POST-WAR POP

CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY

FABER PBK £11.99

BY TOM PERCHARD

Following its first appearance in 1989, *Crosstown Traffic* was showered with praise and prizes. As an investigation of late 60s counterculture without muddied nostalgia, and as a discussion of Jimi Hendrix's musical influence that didn't mention Guns N' Roses, Murray's book was a relative novelty. Indeed, attempts to properly contextualise pop music remain all too rare. While this second edition includes little new material, the unapologetic complexity and confusion of the book's enquiry is, if anything, more pertinent 12 years further into the CD age. Today, the neat repackaging of the 1960s is near complete, while the tangled origins of Hendrix's revolutionary music remain misunderstood.

Murray's book is much more than a biography, and consequently much less: a narrative account of Hendrix's life is skipped over in an impatient 25 pages. But dates and events are only signposts for Murray's thematic tours, investigations that eventually reveal more than the endless parade of anecdotes and conversations found in biographies such as Harry Shapiro and Caesar Glebbeek's *Electric Gypsy*. Rather than names and dates, Murray's account of Hendrix's life centres around recurring themes of identity, paradox and tradition. Even then, the author's main subject is

arguably not Hendrix himself, but the cultural discourse in which he stood.

Murray's early chapters catch the 60s zeitgeist with wit and economy – anti-establishment ferment, growing youth pride and power and America's expanding cultural presence are big subjects dealt with pithily. "What linked the radicals with those who simply regarded the revolution as an excuse not to tidy up their rooms was a sense of possibility," he writes. "A notion that anything could happen, that the ogres of oppression weren't so big – they were just tall, that's all."

Discussions of cultural themes begin locally but travel far. A chapter on representations of masculinity looks first at Hendrix's music and persona – the (often wounded) machismo of his lyrics and the thrust of his stage show – before turning into a wide ranging and savvy analysis of gender politics in the artist's musical world. The subtext of The Yardbirds' "I'm A Man" was, says Murray, "I'm a man [and you're a girl, so get 'em off]"; the subtext of Muddy Waters' and Bo Diddley's was "I'm a Man [don't ever call me boy]". Such subtleties are explored in a sketch of the oppressive and paranoid racial politics of London's 'hippies', black music's new white representatives. As much as a relocation, Hendrix's move to London was a strange dislocation, like John Coltrane coming over to make it big with Stan Tracey's group, and the guitarist is portrayed as a conquering hero accepted only selectively by white musicians and listeners. These people were as unsettled as they were enthralled by Hendrix's blackness, and

Murray writes that after his English 'co-option', Hendrix's problem was not crossing over: "His problem was crossing back."

It's still a problem: Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid is quoted here, railing against Hendrix's continuing 'honorary white' status. Even though he was ignored by black radio in the US and recast as colourless by his English associates, Hendrix remained a musician of black America. Murray places him at the head of a tradition going back through Charlie Christian to Robert Johnson. Mythology and music are intertwined in all these figures' lives, as Murray explains, and as past musicians, who exist now only in their recordings, their myths act as a kind of extra-musical notation, of personality, time and place. Unfortunately, having opened up the fascinating issue of the mythology of black musical tradition, Murray doesn't go on to fully explore it. When Hendrix evokes the myth of the dead, as his playing frequently does, it's not just the sort of voodoo that Murray describes as lying at the heart of blues tradition, nor ancestor worship for its own sake. In stating his own lines in Christian's warm violet tone, or bending notes up and stretching them out into Johnson's steel, Hendrix reanimates a musical heritage and brings his predecessors to the present. Like all improvising musicians, he existed in an eternal performing-now, but was free to jump back in time as his influence leapt forward. This is the chaotic hopscotch of a musical tradition that the guitarist will always figure in. Murray describes the course of 1970s Hendrix-inspired fusion, at one point breaking down with despair – "God, it

was awful" – before arriving at the late 1980s, when, he says, musicians were at last finding out "how to use the information Hendrix left behind".

This narrative confusion is reflected accidentally, unfortunately, in the structure of the book itself. By the end of an excellent and provocative first half, *Crosstown Traffic* has already summed up its argument and concluded it; thereafter, it trails off into endless 'X begat Y' lists of the sort that have dogged earlier attempts to chronicle pop's path, works such as Donald Clarke's *The Rise And Fall Of Popular Music*. And the music itself is skated over somewhat – having talked Hendrix down from mythic devil figure to black American musician, Murray is free to place the guitarist back in his own time and to talk him up again, to show us why he was great by properly addressing the music that made him so. He doesn't, and the book ends too quietly as a result. Murray can't be fully successful when Hendrix's sound is given such short shrift.

The author steals what remains of his own thunder with a trail of appendices. Two of these attachments are new, including a rather moving imaginary interview, supposedly conducted between the author and Hendrix in the mid-1990s. But there are few other additions, and while the 1989 text has been factually updated, it has also been editorially downgraded: there are now far more spelling errors and editorial inconsistencies than in the first edition. Whatever its problems though, Murray's book is always stimulating, chasing after a musician's work across continents and decades. "If I'm free," says Hendrix, "it's because I'm always running." □

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh



LMC'S TENTH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC LONDON PURCELL ROOM UK

FRIDAY NIGHT BY BRIAN DUGUID

The opening night offered a typically eclectic and stimulating concoction. Making her UK solo debut, Miya Masaoka exploded the traditional Japanese koto with the help of electronics, a laptop and good old-fashioned 'extended technique'. That means rubbing the underside to try and make it sound like a mournful whale, of course. Masaoka is equally at home twanging the strings like rubber bands, or bowing them slowly to create penetrating drones, a halfway house between Tony Conrad and Krzysztof Penderecki. Digital loops built up a richly textured sound, or layered rhythms and brief

melodies into something almost funky. At times the tones she plucked or drew from her koto oddly recalled Sonic Youth, alternately sounding like steel guitar or steel wool. The electronics were often unconvincing, especially when Masaoka aped Jean-Michel Jarre's laser harp to activate koto samples. Indeed, the music was at its best when the laptop was least evident.

Two members of Romania's Hyperion Ensemble, Ana-Maria Avram and Luminita Fara, seemed to have stepped straight out of the 60s or 70s, bringing with them the kind of po-faced plinky-plonk composition that sends all right-thinking people running for the hills. *Telesma*, a lengthy crescendo and diminuendo of noisy tape buzz and live percussion clatter, was sufficiently formless to wrinkle brows, but hinted at cosmic delights to come. A duet for electronically assisted voices turned the tables, slowly evolving

a startlingly beautiful sound: evil, chirruping aliens transforming into rainforest nightlife, a hint of throat-singing and a definite sense of the inexplicable. Their third piece, *Zodiaque Antique*, brought in a prepared piano and was the best of the bunch, largely thanks to its greater restraint. Piano flurries, squealing bowed gong and electronic drones again stuck to the space trip modus operandi.

The LMC's studied eclecticism only comes up against problems when it presents artists who really don't fit well with the traditional seated concert hall. The last two musicians of the first evening would both have done better in more appropriate venues, albeit for very different reasons. Apache 61's epileptic, blunderbuss beats sounded a little muddy, when they really demanded a response other than the toetapping or headnodding permitted by the Purcell Room's

seating space. It's noisy, happy music for the body, with the result that the rhythms, accented with a big hint of 70s electropop, couldn't really do their work, and the brain instead had to feed on the more experimental moments between tracks, where a junkshop full of sounds was minced and mashed together.

Coming last on a Friday night ensured that Eliane Radigue's new tape work, *Le Re-Sonante*, produced the largest share of walk-outs. Its snail's pace evolution would have worked better on a fresher audience; a shame, because it was elegant and relaxing. Radigue's electronic drones eschew the complexity and psychoacoustic illusion that several similar composers focus on. Hers are far more grounded, serene and reposed. As with much of her music, its glacial flow required attention and persistence, and those who stayed the course were well rewarded.

SATURDAY NIGHT BY CHRIS CUTLER

PEOPLE LIKE US (UK)

Technology Virtual. Material mostly drawn from records, television and film.

Form Separate pieces, usually following the formula: looped samples (style: 60s exotica) with captured voices over

I thought As a listening object, competently realised. Visually static, sharing that disconnected, slightly startled demeanor common to laptop performers when there is no visible connection between sound and gesture. In essence this was a variation on the media-plundering work pioneered by Negativland, in which a kind of absurdist social commentary emerges out of subversive juxtaposition, or out of the malicious setting of cultural artifacts against themselves. A hard trick to pull off. Strangely, like Negativland, Vicki Bennett used mainly American materials to comment on 70s American culture. As a Brit in the next century, I didn't quite get it, though I have to admit that my disengagement was exacerbated by the preponderance of loops (a strictly personal antipathy) and the fact that it just seems too easy to lay down a carpet of repetition and then drape some voices over it, however nicely realised. Curious combination of new technology and old ideas.

SUSAN ALCORN (USA)

Technology Electric pedal steel guitar, an instrument umbilically joined to Country music and all the baggage and associations that travel with it. Voice, untreated and vulnerable.

Form Separate pieces, largely composed, but with a lot of space for extemporisation. High performance value — every tiny gesture signalled some audible change in the sound. More grit than slick.

I thought Alcorn is a great player who has mastered and redefined an unlikely instrument (I noticed UK exponents BJ Cole and Mike Cooper in the audience). With an exquisite touch she invoked the history of her instrument, extended its emotional and ethereal strengths and explored its microtonal possibilities, drawing it out of the contexts that traditionally render it invisible — or generic — and placing it into its own mature discourse. Harry Partch sonorities and The Grand Ole Opry, with impressive shifts from pure abstraction into ricochets and extended stretches of straight Country — reminding improvisors that 'free' includes the right to be romantic, melodic and four to the bar.

DIANE LABROSSE (CANADA) &

PROVERBS GROUP (UK)

Technology Virtual (samples), electrified (violin

and guitar), acoustic (saxophone, percussion and voice).

Form A programme of deconstructed songs built around proverbs. An LMC commission where Labrosse worked with British musicians, reorganising existing materials for other instrumental and temperamental resources.

I thought These were songs, but taken apart into a mosaic of individual instruments, pure sound, unexpected riffs, extreme dynamics and relay groups underpinning the voices (hers and Sarah Francis's), they eluded any linear development. In other words, an edit and sample approach to ensemble playing that produced a jumpcut music of unexpected twists and turns (nice gestural hand signals controlling). I have seen Labrosse with Québécois artists, and there the results are more extreme and (where applicable) raw and brutal than this ensemble achieved. Since these emotional extremes are a part, I think, of her aesthetic and strength, they were somewhat missed. But it still worked.

SYLVIE COURVOISIER (SWITZERLAND) & IKUE MORI (JAPAN)

Technology Virtual (laptop), electronic (drum machine), acoustic (grand piano).

Form Improvised pieces.

I thought Although the musicians were obviously

having some monitor problems (Courvoisier kicked hers away and Mori finally gave up trying to get more signal) this was a model of time occupation. Virtuosity, sensitivity, interactivity and sheer guts conspired to keep the concert on the edge and in the air throughout. Courvoisier has astonishing technique, and thinks frighteningly fast. She spent a lot of time inside the piano and used the keys to produce sheets, blocks, cascades, whispers and spikes of sound, as well as identifiable notes — and she has the ears of a bat. Standing much of the time, leaning into the strings, always moving, there was as much gesture to sound as you could want — in contrast to Mori's deadpan willing of the sounds she made happen. One of a kind, Mori has moved from drums to drum machine to (drum machine transposed to) laptop, without ever losing her feel for the physical aspects of drums and drumming — still coaxing expression and subtlety out of silicon (sometimes you hear percussion, more often electronic, abstract sonorities). Plus, she possesses the uncanny gift of always doing exactly the right thing (usually not the expected thing), produced miraculously from the nowhere of her virtual instrument. Together, these two were intense, intensely musical, dramatic and then — back to hours and seconds.

SUNDAY NIGHT BY ROB YOUNG

The final night, topped off with a lacklustre, pastel shaded solo piano session by Marilyn Crispell, was redeemed by the San Francisco electronica headcases, Blectum From Blechdom. On stage, as on their *Messy Jesse Fiesta* and *De Snaunted Haus* discs, Blevin Blectum and Kevin Blechdom present themselves as class nerds gone nuts: American St Trinians expellees amok in the laboratory of crazy Onkel Von Braun. Their inclusion in the LMC gig was an inspired choice.

There are times in the life of any organisation or institution when it must find its very precepts and modus operandi questioned and held up for ridicule. The Blectums seemed to sense this, and turned in a profoundly metamusical show

tonight. Reconstructing that most reviled of 80s instrumental inventions, the portable synthesizer, and coming on strong with a song called "Bad Music" (they love it), their sheer exuberance and unhinged mentality made much of the surrounding festival content into so much earnest drudgery. Undoubtedly, some of it is plain daffy kidstuff: some of their more hydrogen bomb vocal duets sound like Mozart's *Figaro* aria on crack (laptopetta, anyone?), and they often throw in private, always deviant and polymorphously perverse lyrics ("Boobacue — my tits are on fire! It's a Titcrowave!"). Silly, sure, but then, the same organisation has more than once promoted Charlemagne Palestine, a man in his fifties who covers a Steinway in cuddly animals, or Haco singing into a saucepan (and think how many Company Weeks have included 'toys' in the instrumental inventory). With nods towards the perceived 'seriousness' of the event, and a quite absurd attempt to frug around the stage, they

left the atmosphere-less Purcell Room's seated audience uncomfortable, but raised one of the few laughs of the three days. Sadly, they sidelined much of the scatological quack dialogues and castration/insertion obsessions evident on their CDs; but in its place came a conveyor belt load of one- or two-minute starburst instrumentals with heavy, clunking drum loops or scuttling drill 'n' bass. Summoning their sounds from a pair of decorated Powerbooks and what looked like a vintage handheld Pacman machine, they favoured the busy, brittle digital rhythmatics of the likes of Kid606: the twanged ruler, the power drill heard through a wall, the squeak of a rubber sole — all combined with the intuitive exuberance that can only come when two friends have developed an intimate private code.

After The Blectums' exuberant mess walked off with the festival, anything else inevitably felt like a downshift of gears. Viola player Charlotte Hug's improvising ensemble put on a brave show of

infinitesimal improv, a genre whose small gestures already feel like so many snowballs hurled into a volcano. Once radical gestures pioneered by the likes of Stockhausen and Nono — deconstruction of the bow into a whip of horsehair and wood — now come over as contrived clichés; avantism in aspic. Annette Krebs's tabletop guitar produced some beautiful scrubbed sonorities as she fidgeted with a ball of steel wool on the strings. A very pregnant Caroline Kraabel prowled the auditorium whispering saxbreath into audience's ears, then all but went into labour kneeling on stage. A too brief summoning of louder forces overstretched the room's electricity supply, leaving the four to scrape on under flickering bulbs. But in the end, tensions between virtuosity and offhandedness never quite resolved into any shapes that distorted the imagination; they lacked the grand arch of an AMM odyssey. This is the way the century ends: not with a whimper but a phut. □

On Location



Clockwise from left: Matthew Herbert, Thomas Brinkmann, Matmos's Martin Schmidt

MUTEK MONTREAL EX-CENTRIS/SAT CANADA

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

"Dedicated to emerging forms of music and sound as redefined by the digital era," MUTEK has quickly established itself as a node in the global network of the digital music underground — its second incarnation brought in performers from nine countries and attracted visitors from as far away as Canada's Western Provinces, California, Mexico and even South Africa.

Curated again by Alain Mongeau and Éric Mattson, MUTEK's 2001 programme bore a striking resemblance to the 'microsound' aesthetic propagated last year, with subtle variations. In place of the Clicks + Cuts bubblefunk of Mille Plateaux there was the grainy Ambient Techno of Cologne's Kompakt and Traum, and the punchy MicroHouse of Perlon; instead of the crystalline wash of 12k, the austere frequencies of Goem and Kapotte Muziek. But despite a growing murmur from some quarters that the glitch invasion is playing itself out, with too many producers churning out a glut of indistinguishable releases and its artists seemingly unable to break out of preset methodologies, MUTEK demonstrated that there is surprising diversity even within a comparatively narrow definition of 'digital music'.

The bulk of the festival was given over to the shuffling, dub-inflected rhythms and fogged ambience that have become a hallmark of Germanic post-Techno. Process, Gustavo Lamas, Philippe Cam, Mikael Stavöstrand, Akufen, Dettinger, Jonas Bering and Mitchell Akiyama all

explored variations on a theme, exploiting a vertical axis of morphing tones and tumbling harmonics as their music sprawled lazily along a horizontal plane, unfolding without direction or drive. This form has become the predominant mode within the broader genre, drawing from dub, House, Ambient and even pop to create a luscious kind of Easy Listening, a supine perspective on the sublime. But even within this apparently homogeneous realm there were surprises. Argentina's Lamas cleared away some of the murk of his earlier work to reveal a breathtaking, if muted, lycism; and Sweden's Stavöstrand, whose album *Reduce* was held back by an incongruous 4/4 kick, developed an unexplored dimension in the thick of his sound, sculpting broad swathes of resonant harmonics perpetually at the edge of implosion. He was immediately preceded by the relentless pulsations of Goem, who interlocked dense rhythmic structures composed only of bass vibrations and tumbling jabs of static. Stavöstrand's live set found an unexpected affinity with theirs. Both managed to make instruments out of the audience's bodies, routing deep rumblings straight through the listeners' limbs. Goem's rock-tumbler swirl proved one of the festival's more useful inclusions in the way that it tied the rhythmic emphasis of Techno to the latticed patterns of 1960s minimalists like Steve Reich and Philip Glass in one direction, and to the arch austenit of noise brutalists like Pan Sonic in another. And indeed, the sonic density and richness explored by most of the artists on the bill refuted the myth of minimalism which has often been attributed to the current

school. Their structures may be simple on the surface, but the effects are voluminous, creating a cavern of tiny collisions like a cross section of atomic fusion.

One of the virtues of MUTEK is that its small size and explicit mission enables it to take the shape of an argument posed around a series of questions. What are the limits of 'digital music'? What are the possibilities for performance in a sphere dominated by computer composition? And, perhaps most importantly, what about pleasure?

Two performances in particular addressed these questions head on. Recreating several pieces from their latest album, the feisty lads in Matmos stirred up a beautiful racket, patching together all manner of samplers and gizmos, even pulling out a slide guitar at one point. Richard Chartier videoed MC Schmidt as he probed his own face with an electrical sensor, triggering a wash of clicks and illuminating the audience with an enormous projection of his eyeball. While the vast majority of performers at MUTEK executed convincingly dynamic

performances with just a laptop and a minimum of gear, Matmos succeeded in integrating their sound with an element of theatricality, presenting a fascinating (if not for the squeamish) glimpse into their working methods.

Herbert's live set, always predicated upon risk, followed a similar trajectory. Sonically the least affiliated with the other performers at MUTEK, his methods are among the most radical. He operates according to a rigorous system of constraints dictating what he may and may not sample, and live, he puts that system into

practice on the fly. He took a shrinkwrapped Geri Halliwell CD and 'remixed' it, striking the packaging against the microphone, breaking apart the jewel case, and eventually shattering the disc itself in a spray of aluminum shards — turning his contempt for the pop culture industry into a hilarious (and groovy!) act of creative defiance.

Visuals played a key role throughout the week, from Aelab's video essay on environmental politics to Rechenzentrum's dynamic combination of off-kilter Techno and live video mixing. Yvette Klein provided a spookily beautiful sequence, like Terry Gilliam meets SimCity, for Process's set. In these forays into New Media, MUTEK felt like a snapshot of a development in the making. Indeed, a sense of witnessing 'works in progress' surfaced several times, with more than one artist confessing that they were using unfamiliar software. At one point during his set Thomas Brinkmann even pulled out a booklet that looked suspiciously like a user's manual, as his grooves went shimmying along.

But lest anyone get too caught up in fretting over the nature of digital sound, Ricardo Villalobos and Tobias Thomas turned out stellar DJ sets of minimal Techno and MicroHouse. And though they operate in a genre sometimes too focused on the future, both were happy to look back. Villalobos closed his set with a searing sequence of kitsch-free EBM, and Brinkmann finished an ecstatic night with New Order's "Bizarre Love Triangle". That track's resonant midrange and pop harmonies suggested an unexpected lineage with the resolutely anti-pop consortium of the digital underground. □



Peter Brötzmann

LE WEEKEND STIRLING COWANE THEATRE UK

BY BIBA KOPF

Scotland's Le Weekend was already half over when the English weekend was just beginning, causing us nine-to-fivers from south of the border to miss Thursday's Contemporary Music Network presentation of David Thomas's *Mirror Man*, and Friday's Diskono curated evening of digital disobedience with Nova Huta, Manola Brilowska and Klangkrieg. By the time we got to Stirling the crowd was 180 strong – more than enough for the sold out signs to be posted at the tiny Cowane Theatre, set up, arts lab style, in what looks like ex-school property just far enough away from the town's centre to fall off its heritage trail of Scotland's heroic losers. If the remaining two days had a unifying theme beyond *Wire* writer/curator David Keenan's insatiable appetite for deranged musical mindfucks, it could be the twilight of the 60s casting a long shadow over the new dawn rising in the East.

Indeed, if it went ahead as Keenan originally conceived it, the final night would have been a formidable international summit of post 60s headz, featuring Japan's Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso UFO, with special guests

Julian Cope and Thighpaulsandra (also a member of Coil). But, hey, even headz get cold, and Cope and Thighpaulsandra cancelled due to illness. In the event hardly anybody asked for their money back; with the cosmic yawp of Acid Mothers expanding to fill the vacuum left by them, nobody felt shortchanged either. In common with the Musica Transonic/Toho Sara/Mainliner trinity, of which AMT guitarist Makoto Kawabata is also a cornerstone, Acid Mothers Temple are the Russian doll-like host body to enough groups to programme Glastonbury solely with different incarnations of themselves. However, with the exception of Nishinohon, a comic, Speed Metal side project briefly aired as a crowdteasing encore, they kept within their Acid Mothers skin for the duration. Their first set was a 60 minute drone piece that gathered momentum as it picked up weight. With the group rolling the drone in layers of reverb and glissando guitar and wooshing synths, the piece went through repeat cycles, growing impossibly dense; groaning loudly, imploding, reconstituting itself afresh. With each turn of the cycle, they brought the piece to a new peak.

Their second set was made up from the same drone stuff, except this time it was sliced and spliced into songs, and further broken up with

throat-singing bass player Atsushi Tsuyama's skits. At one point he paid tribute to his Scottish hosts with a few lines from Rod Stewart's "Maggie May", and at another he serenaded *The Wire* concession stand with a chorus of "Come on baby light my Wire". His kidding aside, the great pleasure of Acid Mothers' music derived from their knowledgeable and enthusiastic embrace of various earlier forms of psychedelic experience, which they gleefully spun through centrifugal drones to release an extraordinarily pure and potent psychedelic essence. 1960s/early 70s psychedelia was never like this. Take it from me. I was there, I don't remember.

Kawabata opened the previous night with a solo guitar set, spinning a lengthy drone piece from the core harmonic tones tapped out on his instrument's neck. The economy of his music-making means made Chicago Underground Duo appear simultaneously overarmed and undermanned. Between Rob Mazurek's cornet and electronics, and Chad Taylor's drums and vibraphone, their material lacked a centre, which Mazurek attempted to fill with unimaginative programmed bass parts. On cornet, his painterly fills were fine on scenesetting details, and Taylor did his best to vary the attack with his vibraphonic spills, but they ran out of hands

before anyone could pick up the narrative. Without a plot and nowhere to go, the music dissolved into 'atmospheric' wisps and disappeared without a trace.

Closing the Saturday night with another drums/horn duo could well have stretched the audience's patience beyond breaking point, had that duo not been German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann and Chicago percussionist Hamid Drake. Inspired by Jimi Hendrix and John Coltrane's *Ascension*, Brötzmann's *Machine Gun* blew the roof off the 60s and never let it settle back. Now in his sixties, he looked slimmed down and surprisingly healthy. Yet, in common with others who have survived their own gargantuan desires, he also looked like he was haunted by what he used to be. The music was correspondingly elegiac, with Brötzmann sounding long meditative tones on his various low register reeds, rather than just blasting out the bellowing, wounded mammoth roar people go to hear him for. Aside from a tremendous drum-sax ritual invocation spoken by Drake, the drummer generously deferred to Brötzmann's toneset. After decades of raging against the dying of the light, Brötzmann has acquired the wisdom to let it illuminate the dark paths he's still travelling. □

TOTALLY HUGE NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL

PERTH PICA/SUBIACO THEATRE CENTRE AUSTRALIA

BY NAOMI MILLET

"I don't know what I'm doing tonight," remarked Rik Rue, the Sydney-based artist who kicked off the Ear Opener event as one of this week-long festival's appetisers, "so I'll just twiddle some knobs and see what happens." Yet his intricately detailed sound creations, as much concerned with process as final form, sounded anything but unprepared. He juxtaposed soothing low frequencies and drones against corrosive samples imported from factories and construction sites. Then, raising both the temperature and the tension, he mixed in crackling flames, whooping alarms, static, beats and groans, conjuring an aural equivalent of Hieronymous Bosch's Hell.

Yet, in moments of respite, the festival had its fair share of lyrical moments of pure pleasure.

Melbourne electroacoustic artist Philip Samartzis offered solos of a surprisingly meditative quality after creating chaos by overlaying dozens of samples with live guitar effects in an interactive duo with Denmark's Rasmus B Lunding. Alone, Samartzis looped water and wind sounds and underpinned them with a gentle, oscillating hum. In contrast, New York laptop drum machinist Ikue Mori resembled an efficient office worker clocking up overtime as she punched away at her PowerMac. Mori offset percussive clicks, crunches, electronic samples and bouncing ping pong balls with chimes and gongs, the latter lending her intricate rhythmic collages a distinct Eastern flavour.

There were startling performances, too, from Australian expat violinist Jon Rose, now resident in Amsterdam, and UK guitarist Mike Cooper, both of whom combined acoustic and electronic techniques in their respective quests to extract every imaginable sound from their instruments. Like a new millennium Paganini, Rose leapt about, sawing and strumming strings, shredding

the bow, rattling and shaking the wood or wheeling through manic arpeggios, stopping just short of destroying his violin to squeeze the last possible effect out of it. Cooper's set was mounted like he was a technician in an arcane lab, where a silver guitar lay on the slab like a patient on an operating table. Using electric fans, slides, bicycle bells and distortion FX boxes, with microprecision the sonic surgeon proceeded to work through the range of multiphonics produced by placing the objects on or near the guitar. A childlike playfulness characterised both Rose and Cooper's acts, and while their notions of organic deconstruction aren't exactly radical these days, the pair's theatrical quirkiness marked them out from the rest.

In terms of emotional depth and sheer exuberance, however, Canada's almost unclassifiable duo Jean Derome and Joane Hétu's appearance at Subiaco was a festival highlight. Whether expressing rage over political hypocrisy or celebrating the human spirit, the artists' idiosyncratic melange of French vocals,

saxophones and simple melodic instruments communicated a universality of wit and feeling that rendered any language barrier redundant.

Going out as the duo 2.10 (meaning two sets of ten steaming fingers), Western Australian pianists Cathie Travers and Emily Green-Armitage presented a meticulously prepared overview of mid- to late 20th century works exploiting the percussive qualities of their parallel grand pianos. Similar hard slog had clearly been put in by two other local ensembles, Tetrafide Percussion and Magnetic Pig, whose Steve Reich concert honoured the composer's 65th birthday. Experiencing Reich's music live not only opened the ears to his musical processes, it also opened the eyes to the physical challenge of performing his music. At their keyboards and marimbas, the ensemble members expertly navigated their way through six hypnotic pieces including *Four Organs*, *Six Marimbas*, *Pendulum Music* and *New York Counterpoint*, counting and signalling to each other with the concentrated intensity of air traffic controllers. □



Mike Cooper (left) and Fred Frith

FRED FRITH + MANDURA + MIKE COOPER & VIV CORRINGTON LONDON BLUE CAMEL AT THE SPITZ UK

BY CLIVE BELL

For those who like to take their live music with a splash of unpredictability, and in reasonably intimate surroundings rather than a carpeted corporate barn, East London's The Spitz has become the venue to watch. Viv Corringham's current project here is The Blue Camel, a series which in a sense is her own career writ large. After releasing albums of free Improv on the one hand, and collections of passionate Turkish love ballads on the other, she has decided to unleash both musical beasts in the same pit and let them fight it out. So in recent weeks The Spitz has witnessed feats of circular breathing and skirling reeds from a Kurdish wedding band and saxophonist Evan Parker on one programme, on another, Turkish club regular Murat Kaya and violinist Sylvia Hallett strove for common ground, trading melodies and improvisations. And tonight

two of Britain's eminent émigré guitarists line up opposite a young Balkan quartet. Since guitarist and singer Mike Cooper's 60s blues albums have been re-released, clubs on both sides of the Atlantic have been tempting him out of his Roman hideaway to perform "whatever he wants". Though his music has done some hard travelling in the years since, often evolving its tone and shape from the environments crossed, Cooper has never given up on the blues. So his carte blanche tonight embraces slide blues on a glinting National guitar, a melancholy stroll through an old Hawaiian song, and spacious Ambient Improv for fuzz guitar and a table full of lo-tech sound distorters. Cooper's duo with Corringham picks its way through some dark, crackling undergrowth, from which they suddenly emerge into a Greek Rembetika song about drugs. The vocals ride Cooper's fuzzed drone like a 70 year old Lou Reed lyc from the eastern end of the Mediterranean: "Bring the white powder/Bring lies and hope/Life is clearer/Seen through smoke."

The four members of Mandura are also from the East Mediterranean. Mainly Greek, they play

traditional instruments but with nary a bouzouki in sight. Surprising and original, Mandura show fluency on their lutes, lyres and frame drums without descending into slickness. They can handle the limping seven beat rhythms of Greek dance without it reeking of the restaurant or hotel lobby. On the contrary, they write their own material and are aiming at something dark and devious. Their moody second number lopes along like an early Pink Floyd instrumental. Eleni Kalimopoulou's tiny, bowed klassikemenç impresses greatly, a fiddle with a mournful human voice. The audience were left wanting a lot more.

Currently occupying an unlikely academic chair in California, Fred Frith takes the stage to noisy acclaim for an all too rare solo performance in his homeland. Rock guitar, string quartet composition and free Improv are all in a day's work for Frith, who exemplifies a type of highly literate improvisor, open-minded and up for almost anything. Watching him, clad in no-nonsense black T-shirt, modestly hunched over his sunburst Epiphone guitar and tapping its neck with both hands, I flash up an image of a Yorkshire farmer anxiously urging a baby's bottle

into the mouth of a sick lamb.

But Frith has clearly been paying attention to the opening acts and painstakingly develops a Middle Eastern melodic intro to his set. His trademark tweaks of the volume pedal, clipping the attack off each phrase, accumulate until we seem to be tripping on psychedelic backwards guitar. Then it's out with the domestic array of paintbrush, shoebrush, duster, rod forced through the strings, and anything else to aid and abet a ferocious rhythmic build-up. Of all improvisors, Frith's sense of drama must be the keenest, launching surprise attacks, layering up intense drones only to scatter them to the winds, and diving in and out of complex rhythm playing. His bare feet tap across a range of pedals, trapping musical phrases in cycling delays, until he has filled the stage from front to back with shifting layers, like sheets of gauze. Eventually a tirade of snarling, gated fuzz retreats to reveal a tiny metronome balanced, ticktocking, astride the guitar bridge. This is music with depth of focus and a sense of perspective. Yet it is so effortlessly theatrical and accessible, it risks giving improvised music a good name. □

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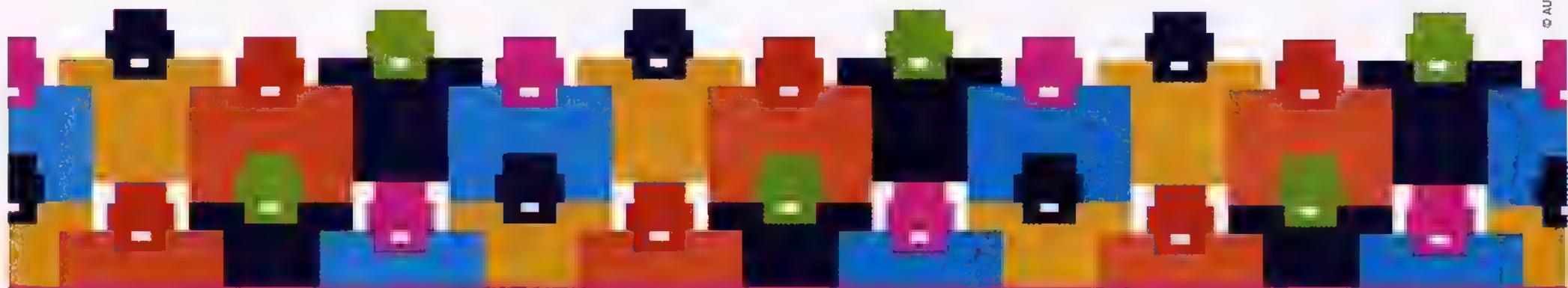
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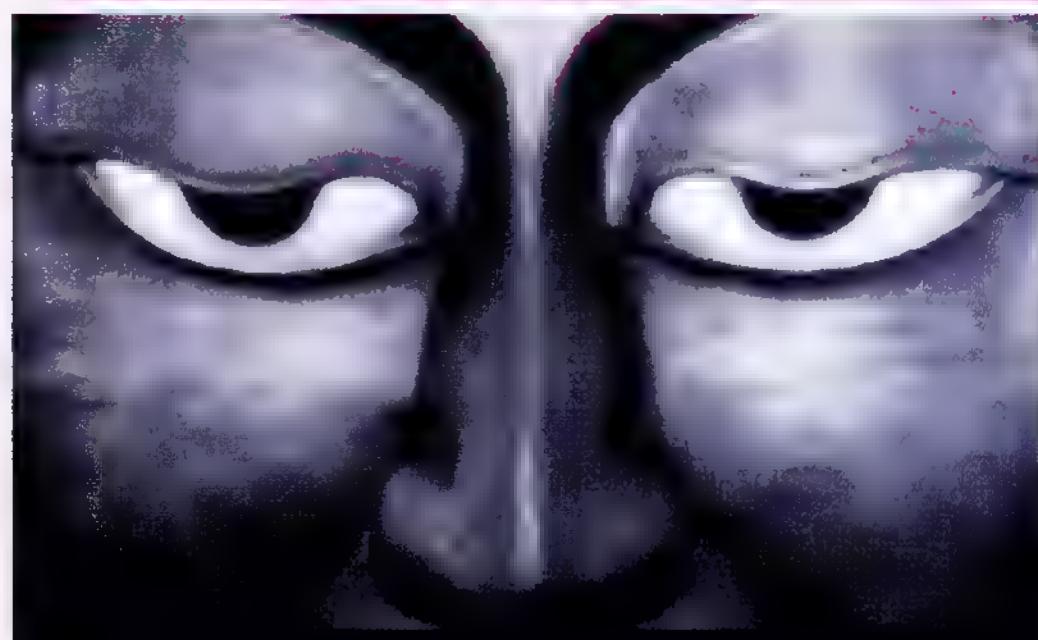
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Out There

July's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts

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Deadline for August issue listings: Friday 6 July



John Tilbury at Konfrontationen

UK Festivals

ESSENTIAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

LONDON

Mass coming out party in North London for Hip Hop headz, Junglists and electronica types. Highlights include Public Enemy, Herbie Hancock, George Clinton with The P-Funk All Stars, Roni Size Reprazent, Isaac Hayes, Red Snapper, Sly & Robbie, Q Bert, Jurassic 5, Dilated Peoples, Beat Junkies, Goldie, Groovender, Fabio, Optical, Ed Rush, Dernick May, Richie Hawtin, Mr Scruff, DJ Krush, Ozomatli, Guru's Jazzmatazz, Gil Scott Heron, Jeru The Damaja, People Under The Stairs, Zion Train, Culture, Mad Professor, Scientist, Jah Shaka Sound System, Scratch Perverts, Howie B and more, more, more. Hackney Marshes, 14-15 July, £35 per day, 09068 230 190, www.essentialfestival.com

FROME FESTIVAL

FROME

Arts festival with a music strand that includes performances from Senegalese kora player Moussa Kouyate with James Brown's saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis (1 July), Pee Wee Ellis again (2), John Law and Tim Garland's The Moment Duo (4) and The Moment Quartet (6), and the 12 piece Zimbabwean group Imbongi (6). Various venues, times and prices, 01373 453 889

GLASGOW JAZZ FESTIVAL

GLASGOW

Big time mainstream jazz event, with a few choice 'fringe' performers including Dave Douglas Sextet (4 July), Sierra Maestra (5), Chick Corea Trio (6), Jazz Jamaica (6) and Isaac Hayes (7). Various venues, times and prices, 0141 400 5000, www.jazzfest.co.uk

HY/BRIDS

NORWICH

Listed incorrectly in *The Wire* 208 as happening in June (and apologies to all concerned for any confusion), this event actually takes place this month. It's a weekend devoted to cutting edge technology in performance organised by the Sonic Arts Network. From glitch to electroacoustics, Hy/brids includes installations, presentations and debates. Performance highlights include Evan Parker in a trio with Richard Barrett and metatrumpet player Jonathon Impett; and Matt Rogalsky and Gregg Wagstaff's performances of work by John Cage. Rogalsky also unveils an online realisation of David

Tudor's Rainforest IV. University of East Anglia, 6-8 July, £30/£20, 01603 592450, www.sonicartsnetwork.org

RHYTHM STICKS

LONDON

Annual collection of concerts loosely based around the theme of percussion. This year's line up includes Roberto Pla's Latin Rhythm All Stars (14 July), a tribute to Iannis Xenakis (14), Marimba Masters (15), Zakir Hussain & John McLaughlin's Remember Shakti (15), Pete Lockett's Network Of Sparks featuring The Akwaaba Drum Orchestra (16), South Bank Gamelan Players (16), Chick Corea drummer Dave Weckl (17), Cape Breton Celtic music from Slainte Mhath (17), Queen Salawa Abeni, the 'Queen of Nigenan music', with her 15 piece Waka Orchestra (18), Carl Palmer (18), Japanese Taiko drumming from Mugenkyo (19), Peter Erskine with The BBC Big Band (19), Lebanese music from Rony Barrak (20), Scandinavian folk from Gjallarhorn (20), Roy Ayers and his All Star Orchestra (21) and DJ Ritu's Sister India project featuring 30 Dhol drummers (21). Royal Festival Hall, various times and prices, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

WOMAD

READING

Still going strong after all these years, the annual World Music conference this year includes Afro-Cuban All Stars, Asian Dub Foundation, Cheikh Lo, Oliver Mtukudzi & The Black Spints, Ochestre National De Barbès and Rachid Taha, plus a number of artists from Rwanda, Algeria, Japan and Sicily all performing for the first time in the UK. Reading Rivermead Centre, 27-29 July, £77.50 (weekend ticket including camping), £36 (Sat or Sun), £20 (Fri only), 0118 939 0930

International Festivals

10 DAYS OFF

BELGIUM

Massive 10 day electronic music festival this year featuring live performances from Squarepusher, Thomas Brinkmann, Ken Ishii, Kreidler with Herbert, and DJ sets from Laurent Garnier, Goldie, Massive Attack's Mushroom, Dernick May and many, many more. Ghent Vooruit, 14-23 July, 00 32 3 226 4963, www.10daysoff.be

AQUAPLANING

FRANCE

Hedonistic beachside festival. Four-square House and Techno predominate, while Durutti Column, Fad Gadget, Isolée, Luomo, To Rococo Rot, Four Tet and others provide the offbeats. Hyères, various venues, 29 June-1 July, 00 33 1 4002 0379, www.aquaplaning-festival.com

BIENNALE DE LYON

FRANCE

Huge contemporary art extravaganza. As far as music goes, scheduled performers over the coming months include Pierre Bastien, Arto Lindsay and Robert Wyatt, plus dance pieces from John Cage's former partner and collaborator Merce Cunningham. Lyon, various venues, times and prices, runs until 23 September, 00 33 4 7207 4141, www.biennale-de-lyon.org

FORMAT 5

GERMANY

Classic and rarely heard electronic works presented alongside new commissions and installations at this notable Berlin event. Performances include The User's Symphony No 2 For Dot Matrix Printers and Dick Raaijmakers' Kvartett for four performers (29 June), Phill Niblock's Sumatra/Japan film projection with live performance and Carsten Nicolai's Crystals (30), Karlheinz Stockhausen's Anes for trumpet, Steve Reich's Different Trains for string quartet and tape, and David Behrman's Runthrough (7 July). Christina Kubisch's work for four instruments and Trautonium and new works by Max Brand, Patrick Pulsinger and Christian Fennesz (13) and finally, a large scale work by Wolfgang Mitterer (14). Berlin Parochialchurch, www.format5.de

KONFRONTATIONEN

AUSTRIA

Major international Improv festival on the Austrian/Hungarian border. This year's line up contains many of improvised music's most wanted suspects, including Barry Guy New Orchestra with Evan Parker, Hans Koch, Mats Gustafsson, Marilyn Crispell, Johannes Bauer, Herb Robertson, Paul Lytton & Raymond Strid, Tipper Gore with Tony Buck, Joe Williamson & Rico Peppente, Ensemble 9.81 with Mats Gustafsson, Greg Goodmann, Georg Cremaschi & Paul Lovens, Four In One with Luc Houtkamp, Johannes Bauer, Dieter Manderscheid & Martum Blume, Dälek, Tim Hodgkinson, Thomas Lehn and Roger Turner's Konk Pack with Shelley Hirsch.

Joëlle Léandre, Carlos Zingaro & Paul Lovens, Ticklish (Phil Durrant, Rob Flint, Kev Hopper and Richard Sanderson), Werner Dafeldecker, Franz Hautzinger, Sachiko M and John Tilbury Quartet, Aeter and Olaf Rupp, Georg Gräwe and more. Nickelsdorf Jazzgalerie, 20-22 July, 00 43 21 2146 2359, www.user.xport.at/jazzgalene, www.konfrontationen.at

MIMI

FRANCE

Longstanding international cross-genre new music festival. This year's line up mixes it up with Güls Weg Watergang, Kassalit, Swiss complexity folk from L'Ensemble Rayé (27 July), turntablist Erik M, a Japanese song project from singer Haco and koto virtuoso Michiyo Yagi's Hoao, plus Pan Sonic (28), Hungarian saxophonist Akosh S Unit and Marc Ribot's ecstatic faux-Cuban Los Cubanos Postizos (29). Marseille Frioul Islands, 27-29 July, 00 33 4 9550 0450, www.lafnche.org/mimi2001

NORBERG FESTIVAL

SWEDEN

The second annual electronic festival in a Swedish iron mine, 170km north west of Stockholm. Performers include DJ Spooky, Scanner, Biosphere and Mike Paradinas, plus a supporting programme of installations, projections, workshops and more. Norberg, 26-28 July, 00 45 2683 8415, www.norbergfestival.com

NORTH SEA JAZZ FESTIVAL

NETHERLANDS

Something for most folks at this packed three day festival. Highlights include Herbie Hancock Electric Group, Dave Douglas Sextet, Gil Evans Orchestra, Ernst Reijseger, Matthew Shipp Duo, Omara Portuondo, Van Morrison, The Zawinul Quartet (13 July), The Chick Corea New Trio, Kip Hanrahan, Paul Bley Trio, Tobias De Jus 4tet (14), Joey Baron, Steve Coleman, Bill Frisell, Irene Schweizer/Han Bennink, Michael Moore (15). The Hague Congress Centre, 00 31 10 591 9000, www.northseajazz.nl

PALEO FESTIVAL

SWITZERLAND

26th year of this festival which straddles the worlds of global music and club culture. Features Taraf de Haidouks, Amon Tobin, Red Snapper, Sainkho Namtchylak, Maceo Parker, Huun Huur Tu, Black Uhuru, Baul Bishwa, Bollywood Brass Band, Geoffrey Oryema and more. 24-29 July, Nyon, 00 41 22 365 1040, www.paleo.ch

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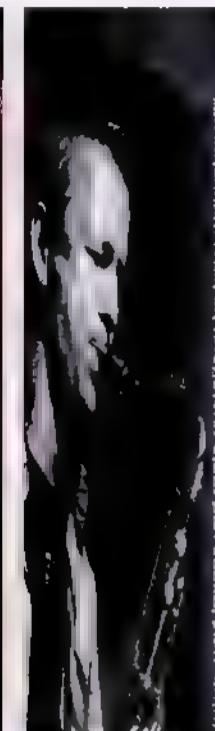
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ensemble 9.81

greg goodman, georg cremoni, mats gustafsson, paul lovins

dälek hip hop from new jersey

john butcher project

ticklish

phil durant, rob flint, key hopper, richard sanderson

tipper gore

tony buck, joe williamson, nicko repolante

four in one

luc houtkamp, martin blume, dieter manderscheid, johannes bauer

joelle leandre / paul lovins / carlos zingaro

dafeldecker / hautzinger
sachiko m. / john tilbury

aeter & olaf rupp

georg gräwe piano solo

konk pack & shelley hirsch

thomas lehn, tim hodkinson, roger turner and shelley hirsch

marilyn crispell / barry guy
raymond strid

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Pram on tour

Special Events

INDIAN SUMMER SCHOOL

UK

An opportunity to study with some of the masters of Indian Classical music in an eight day summer school organised by The Asian Music Circuit. London School of Oriental and African Studies, 28 July-4 August, £210/£170, 020 87429911, www.amc.org.uk

MASSLESS MEDIUM

USA

The vaulted stone chambers of the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage currently house seven site-specific art installations. One of the seven is by the ubiquitous sound artist Francisco López with a piece called *Buildings*, which uses the incidental sounds of domesticity – air filters, boilers and fluorescent lights. New York Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage, runs until July 29, www.creativetime.org

TECHNICS/DMC WORLD DJ CHAMPIONSHIPS

UK

Flares, crabs, backspins and more crazy deck work at the UK finals of the 16th annual turntablist contest. Alongside the competing DJs will be a 'star' routine from DJ Plus One, runner-up in last year's competition. London Shepherd's Bush Empire, 20 July, £10, 020 7771 2000

WORLD MUSIC

UK

A concert of quadraphonic tape music to celebrate the work of composer Tim Souster organised by the Sonic Arts Network. The centrepiece work is a 1970s pre-digital simulation of three audio journeys around the world interlaced with live instrumentals from various localities. London Hoxton Hall, 1 July, 020 7359 4404, www.sonicartsnetwork.org

YAT KHA: STORM OVER ASIA

UK

The Tuva group uncover the country's history with a live performance accompanying a new print of the original uncut version of the remarkable 1928 silent film *Storm Over Asia*. London National Film Theatre, 20 July, 8.45pm, £12.50, 020 7928 3232, www.sbc.org.uk, www.realityfilm.co.uk. The group also play two 'family' shows without the film at London's Purcell Room, 21, 2pm & 5.30pm

On Stage

BADMARSH & SHRI FEATURING

UK APACHE

Virtuosic mix of drum 'n' bass programming and classical Indian multi-instrumentalism. London Mean Fiddler (3 July), London The Spitz (10)

DJANGO BATES'S HUMAN CHAIN

Irreverence a go-go from the ex-Loose Tubes

keyboardist. London Vortex, 9 July, 020 7254 6516, www.palaydirect.co.uk/vortex.jazz

DAVID BYRNE

The David Lynch of avant pop tours. London Forum (1 July), Manchester Academy (2), Edinburgh Queen's Hall (4), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (5), Bristol Colston Hall (6)

TERRY CALLIER

Inspirational soul-jazz troubadour. Brighton Concorde 2 (19 July), London Forum (20)

GEORGE CLINTON & THE P-FUNK ALL STARS

The Mothership stops off in the UK one more time. London Shepherd's Bush Empire, 13 July, £17.50, 020 7771 2000

CHRIS CUTLER

Another chance to catch ReR label boss Chris Cutler's dynamic exploration of "electric drums". Support comes from Rotterdam guitarist Lukas Simonis in a duo with local electronics player Rowan Thomas, plus the extraordinary Alcohol label artists Die Trip Computer Die and Improv from The Bohemian Brothers. London Centurion, 2 July, 8pm, £4/£3, 01932 571323

CHICK COREA

Superstar fusionhead. London Cabot Hall, 7 July, 7.45pm, £17.50, 020 7418 2783

CULTURE

Joseph Hill's roots rock rebels. Brighton Concorde 2, 16 July, 8pm, £10, info@concorde2.co.uk

JUNIOR DELGADO + JAH SHAKA SOUND SYSTEM

The first time in the UK for 13 years for reggae legend Junior Delgado. Support comes from Yami Bolo, Sister Shudon Tucker and the awesome Jah Shaka Sound System. London Stratford Rex, 22 July, 7.30pm-3am, £18, 020 8215 6003

MODOU DIOUF & BENGU DJAMM

Nine piece Sabar drum orchestra from Senegal. London The Spitz, 24 July, 8pm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

CESARIA EVORA

Cape Verde's 'barefoot diva' brings her country's morna songs to the capital for a one-off date. London Royal Festival, 13 July, 7.30pm, £25/£10, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

JAN GARBAREK & THE HILLIARD ENSEMBLE

The Norwegian saxophonist teams up again with the Early Music vocal group. Bristol St George's, 12 July, 7pm & 9.15pm, £25/£6, 0117 923 0359, www.stgeorgesbris托.co.uk

CHARLIE HADEN QUARTET WEST + URI CAINE TRIO

Doubleheader of unimpeachable US jazz. London Barbican, 29 July, £20-£10, 020 7638 8891

KHALED

Royal visit from the undisputed King of Algerian Rai.

Brixton Academy, 30 June, 020 7771 2000

MOUSSA KOUYATE & KEVIN BROWN

Senegalese kora player in a duo with UK blues man. London The Spitz, 18 July, 8pm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

LAMBCHOP

On the road to promote their City Slang album Nixon with support from Zero 7. Bristol Colston Hall (5 July), Manchester Apollo (6), Leicester Summer Sundae Festival at De Montfort Hall (8), outdoor concert at London Somerset House (9)

LIVING COLOR

Vernon Reid's Black Rock coalition. London Forum, 12 July, £16.50, 020 7344 0044

JUAN DE MARCOS'S AFRO CUBAN ALL STARS + CACHAITO LOPEZ

Cuban supergroup plus much feted Bueno Vista Social Club bassist's cool instrumental project. London Ocean (26 July), Liverpool Royal Philharmonic (27). Cachaito also plays Reading Rivermead (28, as part of WOMAD), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (30)

LONDON IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA

Monthly outing for this mammoth all-star grouping presenting conductors and open-ended compositional experiments (from Simon Fell, Steve Beresford, Caroline Kraabel, Evan Parker et al.). London Red Rose Club, 1 July and 5 August, 8pm, £5, 020 7928 4285

DANIELA MERCURY

Rising star of Brazilian song. London Royal Festival Hall, 24 July, 7.30pm, £25/£10, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

THE MOMENT BAND

Pianist John Law's quartet featuring Mick Hutton, Dave Wickins and Tim Garland concludes its latest tour. Frome Festival (4 July), London Vortex (5), Frome Merlin Theatre (6), Bodmin Festival (7)

MILTON NASCIMENTO + GILBERTO GIL

Unique pairing of two giants of Brazilian music. Brixton Academy, 3 July, £19.50, 020 7771 2000

OZOMATLI

The 10 piece LA collective bring their Hip Hop/Latin brew to the UK. London Jazz Cafe (3-4 July), Brighton Concorde 2 (5)

EVAN PARKER

Saxophone colossus. London Vortex, 26 July, 020 7254 6516, www.palaydirect.co.uk/vortex.jazz

PRAM

Birmingham's post-rock exoticists showcase their new *Somniloquy* album. London Garage (July 14), Dublin Whealans (18), Reading Rising Sun (21)

RADIOHEAD + BECK

This month's cover stars play a one-off show in their home town. Oxford South Park, 7 July

SAU RANG ORCHESTRA

Collaborative project between Indian classical and

jazz virtuosos including Andy Sheppard, Surinder Sandhu, Rajeeb Charkraborty, Kai Eckhardt and Antonio Forcione. Liverpool Royal Philharmonic Hall (17 July), Birmingham CBSO Festival (21)

JOHN SCOFIELD + MARC RIBOT Y LOS CUBANOS POSTIZOS

Ex-Miles Davis guitarist plus Marc Ribot's Caribbean phantasies. London Barbican, 28 July, £20-£10, 020 7638 8891

SHOCKHEADED PETERS

The return of Karl Blake's esoteric song project, presented as a string set and an electric set. London Fitz & Fawcett, 29 July, 7pm, £7.50/£6.50, www.salonnoir.co.uk

PATTI SMITH

The New York heroine of literate rock. London Ocean, 23 & 24 July, 020 7314 2800, www.ocean.org.uk

HUBERT SUMLIN

Howlin' Wolf's legendary guitarist brings the electric blues to the South Coast. Brighton Concorde 2, 2 July, 7pm, £7, info@concorde2.co.uk

TARIKA

Versatile, polyrhythmic craftsmanship from Madagascar's best known band. London The Spitz, 4 July, 8pm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

RICHARD THOMPSON

Folk guitar hero. London Union Chapel, 7pm, £15, 25 & 26 July, 020 7771 2000, www.serious.org.uk

TOMMY BOY 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

The original Hip Hop label celebrates its birthday with some of the legends from its roster: Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation, Arthur Baker, De La Soul's Maseo and Dan The Automator. London Scala (5 July), Dublin Fireworks (6), Cork Savoy Theatre (13), Glasgow Queen Margaret Union (14)

YOUNG GODS

Bonecrushing Swiss samplers. London Mean Fiddler, 2 July, £11.50, 020 7434 9592, www.meanfiddler.com

Club spaces

ACAPULCO

New eclectic, bi-weekly club covering minimal House, electro and future jazz. Launch night features a live performance by Portable plus resident DJs Lakuti and Portable. London Plastic People, 4 July, 020 7739 6471

BLUE CAMEL

Last in this short series of concerts bringing together Middle Eastern musics with improvised and experimental sounds features solo act from sound sculptor Max Eastley, sufi poetry with quanun (oriental zither) from Rafiq Abdulla & Abdullah Chady, and an improvising trio of Viv Compton, Rick Wilson & Anne Wood. London Union Chapel, 4

Out There

July, 8:30pm, £7/£5, 020 7267 8388,
ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/viv_dc

THE CLUB ROOM

The return of London Improv-oriented night, now relocated to Hoxton. Paul Dunmall, John Adams, Phil Gibbs & Tony Marsh (3 July), John White's Live Batts and Thomas Kumlehn solo (10), Kelsey Michael's song project Minnow (17), Full Monte with Chris Biscoe, Henry Lowther, Brian Godding, Marcio Mattos and Tony Marsh (24), Lol Coxhill, Mike Walter, Tony Wren and New York drummer Stephen Finn (31). London The Reliance, 8:30pm, £5/£4

CONSUME

Fat Cat Records Split Series night featuring Duplo Remote and others. Glasgow 13th Note, 20 July, 8-12pm, £4, 0141 553 1638, www.consume.co.uk

FABRIC

HipHop, downtempo beats and Junglist science from DJ Krush, UNKLE (13 July), Fabio, Grooverider, Scratch Perverts, James Lavelle, Les Gammas (20), Howie B, DJ Hype, Richard Fearless, The Psychonauts (27) London Fabric, Fridays, 10pm-5am, £12/£10, 020 7356 8898, www.fabnclondon.com

FREE RADICALS

New monthly improvising series continues with Harry Beckett, Paul Rutherford & Tony Wren and Phil Durrant & Mark Wastell (4 July), and Maggie Nicols, Marj McDaid, Gail Brand, Caroline Kraabel, Tony Wren and Stephen Finn (1 August). London Red Rose Club, 8:30pm, £5, 020 7923 4929

GEMERTEL

Leftfield and Improv weirdness at the Bohman brothers' club. Lukas Simonis, Rowan Thomas, The Bohman Brothers Extended Family Band, Daniela De Paulis, Balbir Mandra, Anders Arentoft (30 June), Mystery Dick plus John Russell & Howard Jacques (9 July), Steve Noble group, Garry Todd group (16), Plunk plus Beyond The Boom (23), Stephen Finn, Tony Wren & Mark Wastell plus Ischio Romantico (30). London Bonnington Centre, 8pm, £4, £3, 01932 571 323

HAYWIRE SESSIONS

Andy Weatherall's electronica sessions continue to hotwire London's East End. London 93 Feet East, July 6 & 20, 9pm-3am, £8/£7, 020 7377 6060

HOTJAM

DIY entertainment. Bring your own instrument or

records and the house band Norwegian Lady and house DJs will accompany you. London 93 Feet East, 8 July, 3-11pm, £3 with an instrument, £4 without, 020 7247 3293

KLINKER

All manner of oddities with plenty of quality Improv in this packed pub backroom. Simon Fell Quartet with Gail Brand, Alex Ward & Steve Noble (5 July), CAYD with Tom Chant, Howard Jacques and John Russell (12), Group H/Winters' Forum Weekend with Jeff Nuttall, John Rowan, Jennifer Pike, Lawrence Upton and Bob Cobbing (14 & 15), Tony Bevan Trio with John Edwards and Mark Sanders, Eddie Prevost, Rosy Parlane and Mattin (19), Trelik (26), Stephen Flinn drum solo and Holly 8 Hands (27). London Sussex, 020 8806 8216, www.theklinker.freescrve.co.uk

KEEP IT UNREAL

Return of Mr Scruff's "five hour sets ... set to become the stuff of legend". London 93 Feet East, 13 July, 10pm-3am, £8, 020 7247 3293

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

Turntablist pyro-technics with Loot Pack, Mr Thing, 1st Rate and more. Brighton Concorde 2, 7 July, 5pm, info@concorde2.co.uk

REVERB

This month's headliners at this North East DJ space include Carl Craig (6 July), Justin Mills & Antony Daly (13), Groovender (20), Baby Ford (27). Newcastle Reverb, various prices, 01670 504801/07976 788560

SELECTOR SELECTION

A new series of regular DJ nights throughout the week in the London Institute of Contemporary Arts bar. The week pans out as follows: Asian New Skool breaks from Outcaste Records featuring Shabs (Mondays, 9-11pm), Future Soundtracks from film/TV composer Richard Lannoy (Tuesdays, 9:30pm-12:30am), broken beats and lo-fi from Attica Blues man Charlie Dark (Wednesdays, 9:30pm-12:30am), deep beats, HipHop and electronica from Sie of Howie B's Pussyfoot Records (Thursdays 9:30pm-12:30am) and ex-Specials man Jerry Dammers presents his 'Library of Sound' (Sundays 5-10:30pm). London ICA, 020 7930 3647, www.ica.org.uk

SICK & TWISTED

Blow your head off with this new digital distortion

night featuring gabba, drill 'n' bass, Industrial hardcore Techno and "evil noise." This month: Venetian Snares, DJ Fanny, Alex B & DJ Broken Yolk. London Upstairs at the Garage, 20 July, 10pm-3am, £5/£4

Incoming

THE BIG CHILL AT LULWORTH CASTLE

UK

This year the summer multi-arts festival takes place in the landscaped grounds of Lulworth Castle near the sea at Lulworth Cove. Live performers and DJs include Future Sound Of London, Howie B, Mr Scruff, Herbert, Kruder & Dorfmeister, Plaid, Bent and Norman Jay plus many others. Lulworth Castle, 17-19 August, £89, 020 7688 8080, www.bigchill.net

THE BIG CHILL AT NAXOS

GREECE

The multi arts festival ships out to this solitary Greek island for its second festival of the summer. Music-wise there are live sets from Shur-i-kan, The Bays, Jony Easterby & Ansuman Biswas, Mandalay, Another Fine Day, Laura B and Eva, and DJ sets from Luke Vibert, Matt Black, Pete Lawrence and more. Naxos, 20 September-3 October, 020 7688 8080, www.bigchill.net

INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

UK

The original hippy mystic, global folkies are reunited once again. London Bloomsbury Theatre (3 & 4 August), Sidmouth International Festival (6), Cornwall The Eden Project (7), Dublin Olympia Theatre (9)

JAZZ EM AGOSTO

PORTUGAL

International jazz and Improv festival which this year features Lawrence D 'Butch' Morris's 'Vocal Music', Henry Threadgill & Make A Move, Matthew Shipp, Danuik Lazro/Carlos Zingaro/Raymond Boni and many others. Alongside the concerts are a series of conferences which feature, among others, The Wire's David Keenan and Bill Shoemaker. Lisbon, 11-12 August, 00 351 21 782 3483/3474, www.jazzportugal.net or www.gulbenkian.pt

JAZZFESTIVAL SAALFELDEN

AUSTRIA

23rd edition of this star-studded, international jazz

gathering, including sets by Max Nagl Project, Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet, Louis Sclavis Quintet, Mengelberg/Douglas/Jones/Bennink, Elliott Sharp's Terraplane Plus, Sylvie Courvoisier & Mark Feldman, David Thomas & Two Pale Boys, Henry Threadgill, Paul Bley, Maya Homburger & Barry Guy, Julie Tippetts & Keith Tippett, Andrew Hill, Kimmo Pohjonen, John Abercrombie Quartet. Saalfelden, 24-26 August, 00 43 6582 74 963, www.jazzaalfelden.at

LADYFEST

UK

Self explanatory women in music event, featuring Bangs, The Gossip, Sarah Douger, The Lollies and Strangefruit DJs. London The Spitz, 18 August, 8pm, £5, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

SIDMOUTH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

UK

Foot & Mouth willing, August will see the 47th edition of this seaside festival featuring an expanded definition of folk and traditional musics. Performers include Incredible String Band, Shirley Collins, Jah Wobble's Deep Space, Norma Waterstone, Martin Carthy, Dick Gaughan & Brian McNeill, Zimbabwe's Black Umfolosi and more. Sidmouth, 3-10 August, 01296 433669, www.mrscasey.co.uk/sidmouth

TRANS 004

USA

Fourth annual festival of experimental and minimal electronic sound and art. This year attempts have been made to incorporate digital video editing and streaming alongside performances by Rafael Toral, Michael Shumacher, Steve Roden, Janeck Schaefer, Hecker, Ikue Mori, Kevin Drury, Jason Kahn, Pita, Farmers Manual, Loren Chasse, Helen Mirra and others. The festival also features installations and screenings of international film and video work. Chicago, 6-12 August, 001 773 271 0990, transmit.org

Out There items for Inclusion in the August issue should reach us by Friday 6 July. Fax +44 (0)20 7287 4767, e-mail news@thewire.co.uk

Do not send email listings as attachments. they will be trashed. All listings information should include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings can not be taken over the phone. □

UK Radio

National

BBC RADIO 1 97-99 FM

JOHN PEEL

Tuesday-Thursday 10pm-midnight

The indie nation's bible

GILLES PETERSON

Wednesday midnight-2am Post-Acid jazz

FABIO & GROOVERIDER

Friday 2-4am Vanguard drum 'n' bass

WESTWOOD RAP SHOW

Friday 11pm-2am/Saturday 9pm-midnight

HipHop flavas

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

LATE JUNCTION

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New Music compendium

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ANDY KERSHAW

Friday 10:30-11:30pm World Music

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11:30pm-1am

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JAZZ FILE

Saturday 6-6:30pm Jazz documentary series

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 11:15pm-1am New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Sunday 11pm-midnight Hyper-eclectic avant mix

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ON THE WIRE

Saturday 8-10pm

The Wire's Steve Barker mixes it up wildstyle

BBC MERSEYSIDE

95.8 FM, 1485 MW

PMS

Sunday midnight-2am Eclectic mix of avant sounds

BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM

FROM BEBOP TO HIPHOP

Wednesday 7-10pm, Sunday 10pm-1am

Jazz and nu-beats

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM (MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight

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KISS 100 FM (LONDON)

PATRICK FORGE

Sunday 10pm-midnight Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

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Jungle, drum 'n' bass

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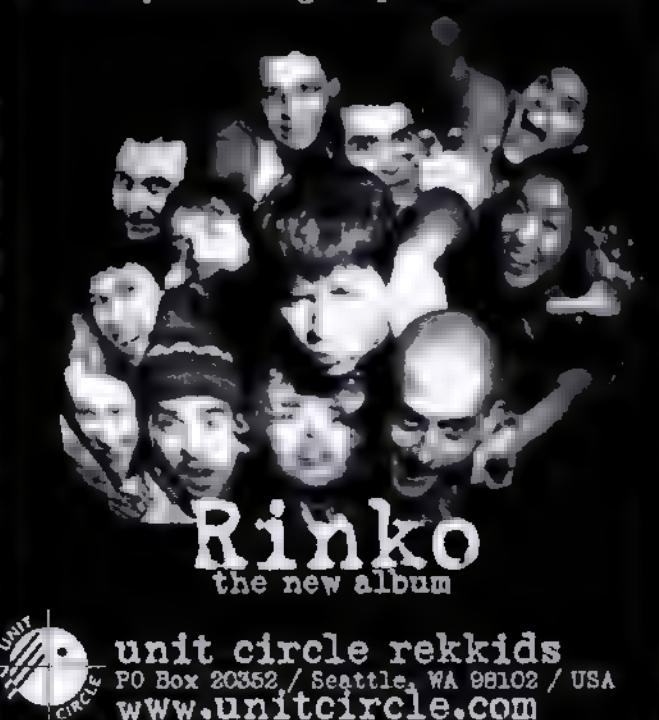
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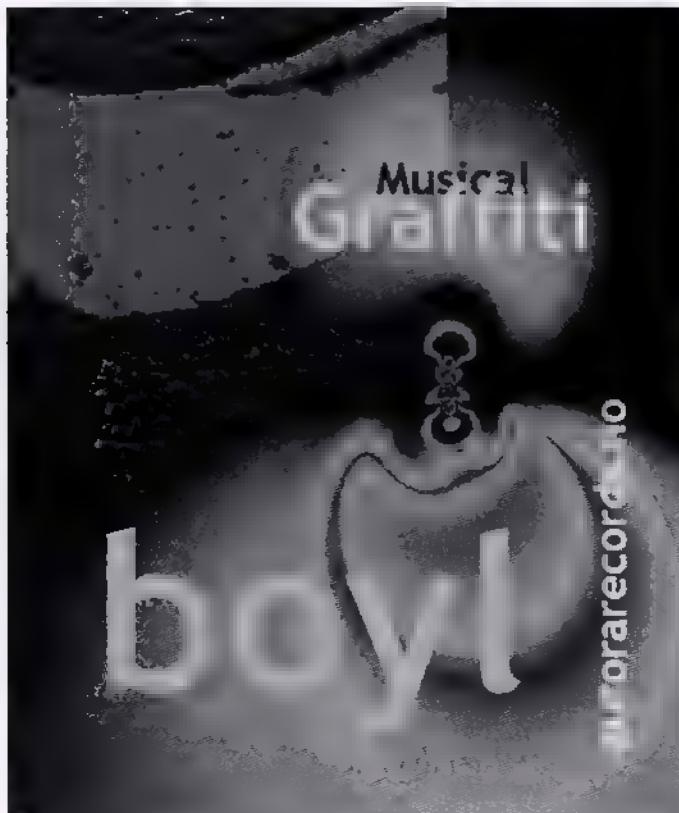
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- 190/1 **Diamond Dallas**, 98 Rewind (Records of the Year), Mark Perry, Angus MacLise, Caetano Veloso's Jukebox, Matt Herbert, Giya Kancheli, Undercurrents 12: Worship the Glitch, DJ Scud, Susumu Yokota
- 192 **Quantum Projects** (DJ Shadow, Blackalicious, Latyx), Ryuichi Sakamoto, Jonathan Harvey, The Primer: North Indian Music, Kid Koala, Lemmy's Jukebox, Ultra-red, Dave Pajo
- 193 **Wire**, Rashied Ali, Richard H Kirk, Bill Laswell's Jukebox, Vladislav Delay, Haco, Kimmo Pohjonen, Tara Jane O'Neill, Ruined Pianos
- 194 **Coil**, Morton Subotnick, Günter Müller, Sussan Deyhim's Jukebox, The Primer: Einstürzende Neubauten, Kid-606, Kim Cascone, Biosphere
- 195 **Sound Art Explosion** (Brian Eno, Christian Marclay, David Toop, Heri Dono), Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Evan Parker's Jukebox, Laure Anderson, Dylan Group, Iain Ballamy, Davey Williams, Jeff Noon
- 196 **Pole**, Harry Smith, The Primer: Lou Reed, John Cale, Nico, People Under The Stairs, Yo La Tengo's Jukebox, Arovane, Erik M, Harry Bertoia
- 197 **World!** (Anti-Pop Consortium, Mike Ladd, Sonic Sum, Done One), Skidoo, Kim Gordon's Jukebox, Tangents: Solar Myth Approaches, William Hooker, Toshimaru Nakamura, Reynolds, Captain Beefheart
- 198 **Merzbow**, The Primer: Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Steven Severson's Jukebox, Phoenicia, Simon H Fell, Pinkie MacLure, Bob Cobbing, Bleeding From Blechdom, Mike Cooper, Die Tödliche Doris
- 199 **Royal Trux**, Burnt Friedman, Sunny Murray's Jukebox, Tangents: Simon Reynolds on dub 'n' roots, Francisco López, Luther Blissett, Joseph Suchy, Lois Vierk, Faust, David Toop on Pierre Henry
- 201 **Chicago Stories** (Isotope 217, Chicago Underground Duo, Trio & Orchestra), Sainko Namthylak, Dan The Automator, Add N To (X)'s Jukebox, Tangents: Music & Architecture, Janek Schaefer, Yat-Kha
- 202 **Zakir Hussain**, Christian Wolff, HIM, The Primer: British folk & folk rock, Otomo Yoshihide's Jukebox, Rob Ellis, Bill Wells, Beta Bodega Coalition
- 203 **Sigur Rós**, Rewind (Records of the Year), Mark E Smith's Jukebox, Amiri Braka, David Grubbs, Tangents: Psychedelic Soul, Jah Wobble's Epiphany, Barbara Morgenstern, Thomas Lehr
- 204 **Tortoise**, The Primer: The Residents, Secret Museum of Mankind, Bob Ostertag, Gary Lucas's Jukebox, Lesser, Peaches, Japanorama live
- 205 **Talvin Singh**, Ornette Coleman, Phill Niblock, Stephen Malmark's Jukebox, Tangents: The Blank Generation, Thighpaulsandra, John Wall, Future Pilot AKA, Joy Division
- 206 **John Cale**, The Primer: Early Minimalism, Tom Zé, Keith Rowe, Matmos, Richard Norris's Jukebox, 2nd Gen, Antibasis, Lee Ranaldo on John Fahey
- 207 **Generative Music** (Oval, Eno, Autecire, Evan Parker, Michael Prime), Keith Tippett, Tangents: Sound Poetry, Current 93's Jukebox, Touch, Baro Pond, Phil Cohen, Håkan Lidbo
- 208 **Beyond Companion Flow** (El-P, Mr Len, Mr Lif, Bigg Jus, Cannibal Ox), Neu!, Fred Frith's Jukebox, The Primer: Fire Music, John Duncan, Electrelane

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Epiphanies

Burning: Chrome's Damon Edge and Helios Creed

Ian Shirley's ears are repolished by the metallic sci-fi reflections of Chrome

In October 1992 I found myself in San Francisco researching a biography I was writing about The Residents. One day, while one of the group's anonymous members was talking to me off the record, the conversation turned to another local cult personality: Damon Edge of Chrome. What was he like? I asked, curious to hear more about this legendary figure. "He was a creepy guy," the Resident replied. Talk about the kettle calling the pot black.

I have never understood why Chrome remain locked away in the deepest dungeon of obscurity. If Faust and Neu! have been let out for a little fresh air and critical acclaim, why not Chrome? They were studio based explorers whose early albums sound like templates for Primal Scream's *Vanishing Point* and *EXTRMNTR*. And late in their career, they developed a hardcore sound that has been acknowledged as an influence by Nine Inch Nails. Indeed, The Butthole Surfers loved them so much, they invited guitarist Helios Creed to guest on their 1993 album, *Independent Worm Saloon*.

My introduction to their music came in November 1979. They were one of three San Francisco groups featured on The Residents' compilation, *Subterranean Modern*. Their two tracks, "Anti-Fade" and "Meet You In The Subway", sounded like an Industrial version of The Stooges: a primitive garage rhythm over which guitars, synthesizers and vocals were treated with a barrage of effects. I wanted more.

In New Wave's free market economy, they were available on import outside the US. I'd like to lie and say I rushed out and bought them all the next day, but I couldn't: money was tight for a schoolboy working part-time stacking shelves in Tesco. I could only afford one, so I bought *Half Machine Lip Moves* (1979), because it had the best cover – Edge and Creed covered head to foot in surgical bandages. The other two joined my collection over the next few weeks.

Forget 1977's *The Visitation* – it's too embryonic, and does not feature Creed. But *Half Machine* and its predecessor *Alien Soundtracks* are brilliant

introductions to the gritty lo-fi version of the Chrome sound, with Damon Edge pounding out a ferocious 4/4 rhythm on the drums and Helios Creed carving out great slabs of sound on guitar that were equally inspired by Hendrix, Jimmy Page and the raw power of The Stooges. Bass, synths and other instruments, even other musicians, were added, and then the treatments started. As a producer, Edge was the Brian Wilson of early Industrial music, kind of. Working with an eight-track, he sliced and spliced songs, and mixed in 'found' sounds such as the chatter of TV, radio and a kitchen sink of mixing desk effects. Applied to the drums, his trademark heavy phasing shifted explosive beats from left to right until they sounded like a military jet swooping between your speakers. More recently, the way Washington DC post-rock trio Trans Am deployed phasing on last year's *Red Line* album sounded like they were paying tribute to Chrome. Edge's lyrical themes were drenched in sci-fi imagery – war, depersonalisation, interstellar travel and strange hybrid beings – that could have been torn from the novels of Samuel Delany, Joe Haldeman and Larry Niven. They were not so much sung as screamed, whispered, flayed or smeared on top of the tracks.

What made Chrome fascinating back then was, the more I found out about them the less I knew. Faraway San Francisco seemed especially exotic to a 17 year old living in a council block in the East End of London. There were rumours that Damon Edge composed music for porn films. Was this true, or was it an embellishment on the real story that the group launched their second album, *Alien Soundtracks*, by playing it as accompaniment to a live sex show? On the rare occasions he gave interviews, Edge delighted in disinformation. The Residents found him creepy because Edge always had an amused smile, as if he were enjoying a private joke at the world's expense.

I rejoiced when I heard that Chrome had signed to British label Beggars Banquet in 1980. They made a great album, *Red Exposure*, and although songs like

"Electric Chair" and "Animal" had a strong commercial edge, their delight in experimentation was still there, with Edge whacking out the rhythm on "Eyes In The Center" on a 50 gallon oil drum.

Would Chrome find their way into the mainstream, on the back of the rave reviews garnered by *Red Exposure*? They made promotional videos, indulging themselves by dressing up as Droogs from *A Clockwork Orange*. They also recorded "Read Only Memory", the soundtrack to a video film that was started but never finished. Dominated by backwards hi-hat, drums and throbbing bass, today it sounds like an early signpost towards Techno.

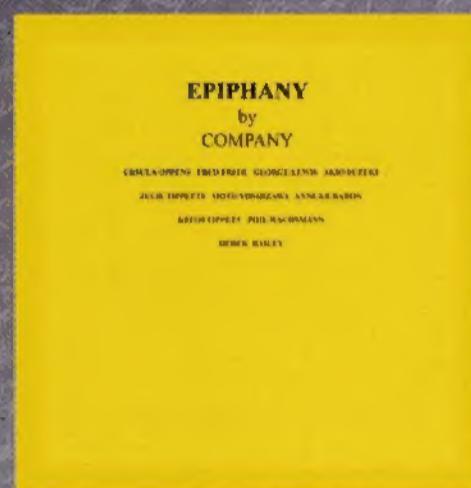
Red Exposure turned out to be a peak they never bettered. On 1981's *Blood On The Moon*, the duo recruited John and Hilary Stench on drums and bass, even as they stripped their sound down to something resembling early hardcore. I hated it when it came out and don't like it much better now. This line-up only got to play two gigs, a festival in Italy and a show in San Francisco. They held back from doing a full tour because, as Helios Creed revealed in 1999, Damon Edge suffered from agoraphobia. "He had a lot of problems with playing live," Creed told me. "[He feared] Maybe he'd get overshadowed. He never wanted to play live much. We really missed out because he didn't want to play live."

As the music became increasingly erratic, wandering close to Goth rock territory, my interest waned. Chrome split in 1983. Damon Edge kept the name and continued to release records, much of it awful (has anyone ever got all the way through the 42 minute narrated album that was *The Clairaudient Syndrome*?). When he died in mysterious circumstances in 1995, he was 45 years old. In 1996, Creed once again began recording as Chrome and in 1998 took a group out on the road to play 25 dates across America. OK, people finally got to hear tracks like "Chromosome Damage", "New Age" and "Firebomb" played live. But as anyone with a sex manual but no hands on experience will tell you, it wasn't the same thing. □

COMPANY

At the present time there is no reliable calculation of the total number of musicians who have played in Company.
A partial list includes

GEORGE LEWIS VINKO GLOBOKAR FRED
FRITH URSULA OPPENS ANTHONY BRAXTON
AKIO SUZUKI TRISTAN HONSINGER LOL COXHILL
DAVE HOLLAND BUCKETHEAD LEE KONITZ
JOHN ZORN LEO SMITH STEVE BERESFORD
PAT THOMAS STEVE LACY RICHARD TEITELBAUM
BAUM VANESSA MACKNESS MAARTEN ALTEA
ALEXANDER BALANESCU PAUL LOVENS TEBBE
LIPERE REGGIE WORKMAN MISS MAMA YOMA
PETER BROTHMAN KONO GEORGIE BORN
HENRY KAISER ANTHONY PAY ROBYN
SHULKOWSKY JOHN BUTCHER TONY OXLEY
JIN HI KIM STEVE NOBLE MOTO YOSHIZAWA
PHIL MINTON MIN TANAKA PAUL HAINES NICK
CAULDREY MAX EASTLEY PETER VAN BERGEN
ALEX WARD EUGENE CHADBOURNE PHIL WA
CHSMANN DAVID TOOP MATS GUSTAFSSON
EVAN PARKER YVES ROBERT KATY DUCK
MARK DRESSER PETER CUSACK ROBERT
DICK TERRY DAY HAN BENNINK KEITH
TIPPETT TOSHI TSUCHITORI FRANK PERRY
HUGH DAVIES CYRO BAPTISTA MISHA MEN
GLEBERG LINDSAY COOPER EDDIE PREVOST
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LEANDRE J.D. PARRAN KJELL NORDESON
CHRISTINE JEFFREY JOHNNY DYANI JULIE
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BARON MICHAEL SNOW TONY COE
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TAKAGI JAN de BOER DAVID SHEA OREN
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BENDIAN SACHIKO NAGATA MATT WAND
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KENICHI TAKEDA MIN XIOU-FEN
CHARLIE



COMPANY in MARSEILLE

Derek Bailey guitar Rhodri Davies harp
Simon H. Fell bass Will Gaines dance
claquettes Mark Wastell cello

Recorded Marseille 1999
A double CD

EPIPHANY by COMPANY

Ursula Oppens Fred Frith George Lewis
Akio Suzuki Julie Tippets Moto Yoshizawa
Anne Le Baron Keith Tippett Phil
Wachsmann Derek Bailey

Epiphany recorded 1982
Originally a double Incus LP 46/47
Re - issued on double CD

COMPANY 5

Leo Smith Maarten van Regteren Altena
Derek Bailey Tristan Honsinger Anthony
Braxton Steve Lacy Evan Parker

Company 5 recorded 1977
Originally Incus LP 28 Re - issued on CD

Other COMPANY recordings available on Compact Disc

COMPANY91 Volumes 1, 2 & 3 Recorded 1991
Alexander Balanescu Vanessa Mackness Yves Robert Derek Bailey Paul Lovens Paul Rogers Pat Thomas Buckethead John Zorn

ONCE COMPANY

Lee Konitz Richard Teitelbaum Barre Phillips Tristan Honsinger Carlos Zingaro Steve Noble Derek Bailey

COMPANY 6 & 7 Recorded 1977 Re - issue of Incus LP 29 & 30

Derek Bailey Han Bennink Steve Beresford Anthony Braxton Lol Coxhill Tristan Honsinger
Steve Lacy Evan Parker Maarten van Regteren Altena Leo Smith

Limited availability of Company recordings on vinyl

COMPANY 3 LP25 Han Bennink / Derek Bailey

COMPANY 4 LP26 (Plain cover only) Steve Lacy / Derek Bailey

All recordings available from :

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FORTHCOMING RELEASES



OSUNLADE - PARADIGM

(*New York Deep House*)

SJR LP/CD 52 (double LP/single CD)

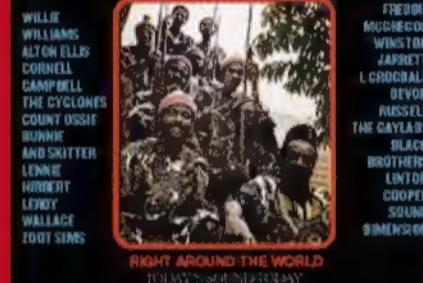
RELEASE DATE: 2 July 2001

LABEL: SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

New York based Osunlaade is a priest in the African religion of Ife. He is also releases deep spiritual house on the New York label Yoruba. He is at present working with India (from Masters at Work), DJ Gilbert (Versatile in France), Phil Asher, Alex Attias and more. His single is currently being played by Kenny Dope, Gilles Peterson, Louis Vega, Ron Trent, Jazanova, Kruder and Dorfmeister... This LP is his first on Soul Jazz Records and includes the single "Rader Du".

STUDIO ONE ROOTS

THE ORIGINAL



RIGHT AROUND THE WORLD
TOUR OF THE GATEWAY

SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

STUDIO ONE ROOTS (Reggae)

SJR LP/CD 56 (Double LP/ Single CD)

RELEASE DATE: August 2001

LABEL: SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

Third in the Studio One series. This features some of the deepest roots music to come out of Studio One. Sleeve notes by Lloyd Bradley (author of Bass Culture). Essential!



SATURDAY NIGHT FISH FRY

(*New Orleans*

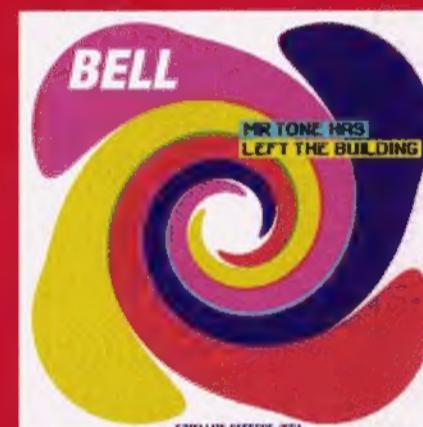
Funk and Soul vol 2)

SJR LP/CD 53 (double LP/single CD)

RELEASE DATE: 9 July 2001

LABEL: SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

Second volume of New Orleans Funk and Soul featuring Eddie Bo, The Meters and more!



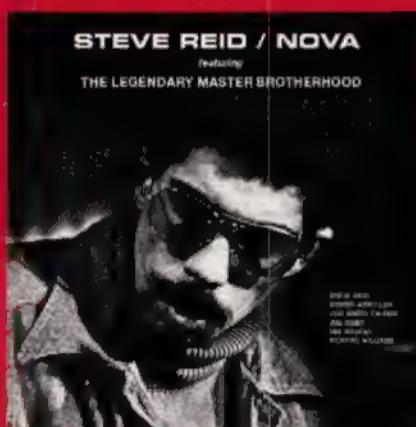
BELL - MR TONE (Electro)

STL 035 (12" single)

RELEASE DATE: 26 July 2001

LABEL: SATELLITE RECORDS

4th Single from UK electro group Bell. Fans of Electro, Mantronix, Kraftwerk, Drexciya and Aux 88 in equal measure this is the 4th release from Bell.



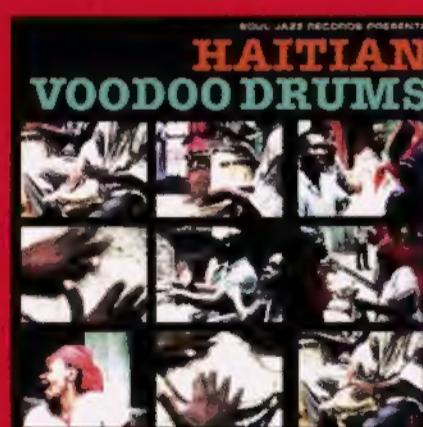
STEVE REID - NOVA (Deep Jazz)

USLP/CD15 (single LP/single CD)

RELEASE DATE: August 2001

LABEL: UNIVERSAL SOUND

Second issue in our series of artists featured on "Universal Sounds of America" (SJR LP/CD27). The first release was Art Ensemble of Chicago's "Les Stances A Sophie". Steve Reid's "Nova" was recorded in 1975 and released on the minuscule Mustevic Sound label. Seriously deep!



HAITIAN VOODOO DRUMS (drumming)

US LP/CD 16 (Double LP/single CD)

RELEASE DATE: August 2001

LABEL: UNIVERSAL SOUND

Drum Rhythms from Haiti. Recorded in Port au Prince, Haiti and featuring drummers from societe absolument guinen. A serious record!

PLUS! 500% DYNAMITE (reggae)

SJR LP/CD 55 (double LP/single CD)

RELEASE DATE: 24 July 2001

LABEL: SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

Here it comes..... funky reggaedancehallstyle!